Representative Plays of Eugene O'Neill

ANNA CHRISTIE
MARCO MILLIONS
THE EMPEROR JONES
WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE
THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES

All Complete in One Volume

"EUGENE O'NEILL'S is the first name to be mentioned in any discussion of the American theatre of today, and he is the only one of our playwrights who has a wide international fame . . . The greatness of his plays lies in the fact that they achieve a grandeur which their rational framework is impotent even to suggest. Man, deprived of the importance which Religion conferred when it made him important to the universe as a whole, here raises himself by his own bootstraps, and by the very strength and articulateness of his passions asserts the dignity which a rationalistic psychology denies him. . . . Yet O'Neill has created his characters upon so large a scale that their downfall is made once more to seem not merely pathetic but terrible."

—*Joseph Wood Krutch*

Easter – 1939

"The Word became their flesh, they say. Now all is flesh! And can their flesh become the Word again?"

This, I think, is the key-note query modernity must answer, if it is to be "saved." In "Marco Millions," O'Neill puts his finger on the septic spot that exudes poison throughout the body politic! "Now all is flesh!" is the diagnosis. And the cure? "That we might attain unto the resurrection!" – "that the flesh might become the Word again!"

Henry W. Grace

REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS
OF
EUGENE O'NEILL

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MARCO MILLIONS
THE EMPEROR JONES
"ANNA CHRISTIE"
WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE
THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES

NEW YORK
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REPRESENTATIVE PLAYS OF EUGENE O'NEILL

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MARCO MILLIONS

FOREWORD

This play is an attempt to render poetic justice to one long famous as a traveler, unjustly world-renowned as a liar, but sadly unrecognized by posterity in his true eminence as a man and a citizen—Marco Polo of Venice. The failure to appraise Polo at a fair valuation is his own fault. He dictated the book of his travels but left the traveler out. He was no author. He stuck to a recital of what he considered facts and the world called him a liar for his pains. Even in his native Venice, he was scoffingly nicknamed "the millionaire," or "Marco Millions." They could not take seriously his impressive statistics about the "millions" of this and the "millions" of that in the East. Polo, the man of brass tacks, became celebrated as an extravagant romancer and ever since has traveled down the prejudiced centuries, a prophet without honor, or even notoriety, save in false whiskers. This has moved me to an indignant crusade between the lines of his book, the bars of his prison, in order to whitewash the good soul of that maligned Venetian.

Dr. Crane said that he represents the type of man that is so engaged in seeking after crass materialism that he has completely forgotten morality and his sense of right and wrong. He is no longer sensitive to hurting even those who love him.

"All is flesh" Yet he pretends to be a christian!

I'd much rather read Bible or Hymn-Book, or Emerson than this fool dialogue! Let's read first things first.
Bertha B. Johnson

CHARACTERS

Christians (in the order in which they appear):

A Traveler
Marco Polo
Donata
Nicolo Polo, Marco's father
Maffeo Polo, Marco's uncle
Tedaldo, Legate of Syria (afterward Pope Gregory X)
A Dominican Monk
A Knight-Crusader
A Papal Courier
Paulo Loredano, Donata's father, a gentleman from Venice

Ladies and gentlemen of Venice, soldiers, people of Acre, musicians, servants, etc.

Heathen (in the order in which they appear):

A Magian Traveler
A Buddhist Traveler
A Mahometan Captain of Ghazan's Army
The Ali Brothers, Mahometan merchants
A Prostitute
A Dervish
Two Buddhist Merchants
Two Tartar Merchants

A Mongol Priest

Emissary from Kublai

Kublai, the Great Kaan

Princess Kukachin, his granddaughter

Chu-Yin, a Cathayan sage

General Bayan

A Messenger from Persia

Ghazan, Khan of Persia

A Buddhist Priest

A Taoist Priest

A Confucian Priest

A Moslem Priest

A Tartar Chronicler

People of Persia, India, Mongolia, Cathay, courtiers, nobles, ladies, wives, warriors of Kublai's court, musicians, dancers, Chorus of Mourners.

PROLOGUE: A sacred tree in Persia near the confines of India toward the close of the thirteenth century.

ACT ONE:

Scene One: Exterior of DONATA's house, Venice—twenty-three years earlier.

Scene Two: Palace of the Papal Legate of Syria at Acre—six months later.

Scene Three: Persia—four months later.

Scene Four: India—eight months later.

Scene Five: Mongolia—eleven months later.

Scene Six: Cathay—The Grand Throne Room in KUBLAI's palace at Cambaluc—one month later.

ACT TWO:

Scene One: The Little Throne Room in KUBLAI's summer palace at Xanadu, "the city of Peace," fifteen years later.

Scene Two: The royal wharf at the seaport of Zayton, several weeks later.

Scene Three: Deck of the royal junk of the Princess Kukachin at anchor in the harbor of Hormuz, Persia—two years later.

ACT THREE:

Scene One: The Grand Throne Room in the Imperial Palace at Cambaluc, one year later—and later the Dining Room of the Polo Home in Venice at the same time.

Scene Two: The Grand Throne Room at Cambaluc—one year later.

EPILOGUE: The theatre.

"MARCO MILLIONS"

PROLOGUE

SCENE: *A sacred tree on a vast plain in Persia near the confines of India. Votive offerings, pieces of cloth torn from clothing, bangles, armlets, ornaments, tapers, have been nailed on the trunk or tied to the branches. The heavy limbs spread out to a great distance from the trunk. Beneath them is deep cool shade, contrasting with the blinding glare of the noon sun on the sandy plain in the background. A merchant carrying in each hand a strapped box that resembles a modern sample case, plods wearily to the foot of the tree. He puts the boxes down and takes out a handkerchief to mop his forehead. He is a white Christian, middle-aged, average-looking, with a moustache and beard beginning to show gray. His clothes in the style of the Italian merchant class of the thirteenth century are travel-worn. He sighs, tired and hot.*

Phoo!

[*From the left a* MAGIAN, *a Persian, dressed in the fashion of a trader, comes in. He carries a small, square bag. He also is hot, weary, and dust-covered. In age and appearance, making allowance for the difference in race, he closely resembles the* CHRISTIAN. *He and the latter*

stare at each other, then bow perfunctorily. The MAGIAN *sets down his bag and wipes his brow*]

CHRISTIAN

[*Sympathetically*]

Hot as hell!

MAGIAN

[*Grimly*]

Hotter!

[*They both chuckle. A* BUDDHIST, *a Kashmiri traveling merchant comes in, puffing and sweating, from the right. He has a pack strapped on his back. He resembles the other two in the essential character of his body and face. He stops on seeing them. After eyeing him for an appraising second, the two bow and the* BUDDHIST *comes forward to set his pack beside the bags of the others*]

BUDDHIST

[*With relief*]

Phoo!

[*Then breaking the ice*]

The sun would cook you!

MAGIAN

It is hot certainly.

CHRISTIAN

[*As they all sit down to rest, looks from one to the other—jovially*]

Funny! You'd think we three had an appointment here. Your faces look familiar. Haven't I seen you somewheres before?

MAGIAN

In the house of the courtezans at Shiraz. You were drunk.

BUDDHIST

I happened to be there that night, too. You danced and sang lewd songs.

CHRISTIAN

[*A bit embarrassed, but grinning*]

Humn—oh, yes—I remember. It was my birthday and I'd taken a drop too much—a very unusual thing for me.

[*Then abruptly changing the subject*]

How are conditions down your way?

BUDDHIST

[*Pursing his lips*]

Slow. I come from Delhi. There is a new import tax and trade is very unsettled. We make prayer beads.

MAGIAN

[*Gloomily*]

And I, for my sins, am hawking a novelty, a block-printed book, for an Arab house. It contains one thousand Arabian lies, with one over for good measure, all full of lechery—at least so they instructed me to tell people to get them to buy.

CHRISTIAN

Did your trip take you down around Ispahan way?

MAGIAN

I just came from there. It is a sad city now. All the bazaars have been closed by an imperial edict in mourning for Queen Kukachin.

CHRISTIAN

[*Bounding to his feet as if a wasp had stung him*]

Is Queen Kukachin dead?

[*Stunned*]

Why, I've got a letter of introduction to her from the head of

my firm—Marco Polo of Polo Brothers and Son, Venice. He acted as her official escort, and took her from Cathay to Persia to be married! Why, I was counting on selling her and her husband a whole fleet load of goods!

MAGIAN

[*Suddenly, pointing off left*]

What makes that cloud of dust?

[*They all stare and begin to grow worried*]

CHRISTIAN

It doesn't look like camels.

BUDDHIST

[*Fearfully*]

It has a strange look!

CHRISTIAN

It's coming directly this way.

MAGIAN

These plains are haunted by evil spirits.

CHRISTIAN

[*Very frightened, but striving to put up a brave front*]

I've heard those rumors. And I know for a fact that people are sometimes possessed by devils, but I don't believe—

BUDDHIST

[*Suddenly, pointing to the tree*]

I am going to offer a prayer for protection to this tree sacred to Buddha.

CHRISTIAN

MAGIAN

[*In chorus—irritably*]

Sacred to Buddha?

BUDDHIST

Certainly! Do you not know the legend of how the Holy Sakya picked a twig to cleanse his teeth, and then throwing it away, it took root, and sprang up into this mighty tree to testify forever to his miraculous power?

CHRISTIAN

[*Resentfully*]

You're absolutely all wrong! This tree was the staff of our first father, Adam. It was handed down to Moses who used it to tap water out of stones and finally planted it. The cross our Lord was crucified on was made of this wood. And ever since this tree has been sacred to Him!

MAGIAN

[*Cuttingly*]

You have both of you been duped by childish lies! This tree is sacred to the founder of the one true religion, Zoroaster, who brought a shoot of the Tree of Life down from Paradise and planted it here!

BUDDHIST

[*Scornfully*]

You are a pair of superstitious sheep!

CHRISTIAN

You are a couple of idolatrous dogs!

MAGIAN

The two of you are blasphemous hogs!

[*They glare at each other insultingly, their hands on their daggers. Suddenly they hear a noise from the left. Their eyes at once are turned in that direction and, forgetting personal animosities, they give a startled exclamation at what they see*]

BUDDHIST

They are pulling a chariot!

CHRISTIAN

They must be slaves. See how the driver lashes them!

BUDDHIST

But what can that be on the wagon—like a coffin!

CHRISTIAN

It must be treasure!

MAGIAN

No. It is a coffin.

[*Trembling*]

Ssst! I have a foreboding of evil.

[*They prostrate themselves, their faces to the ground. A moment later, preceded by shouts, a cracking of whips, and the dull stamping of feet, a double file of thirty men of different ages, stripped to the waist, harnessed to each other waist-to-waist and to the long pole of a two-wheeled wagon, stagger in, straining forward under the lashes of two soldiers who run beside them and the long whips of the* CAPTAIN *and a* CORPORAL *who are riding on the wagon, the* CAPTAIN *driving. As they reach the middle of the shade they stop. Lashed on the wagon is a coffin covered with a white pall*]

CAPTAIN

[*A brutal, determined-looking man of forty, bellows*]

Halt!

[*The files of bleeding and sweating men collapse in panting, groaning heaps. The* SOLDIERS *sprawl down beside them. The* CAPTAIN *springs off the wagon*]

Phoo! This shade is grateful.

[*He looks at the tree—then in an awed tone*]

This must be the Holy Tree which was once the staff of Mahomet and, passing down through generations, was buried in the grave of Abu Abdallah where it struck root and grew by the will of Allah into this tree.

[*He makes obeisance and prays to the tree as do the* SOLDIERS. *He gets up and takes a gulp of water—then, looking around, notices the three merchants—with startled surprise, drawing his sword*]

Ho! What are you? Get up!

[*They do so frightenedly. He stares at them and laughs coarsely with relief*]

By all the demons, you startled me! But you traders are like fleas, one finds you everywhere!

[*Then with a scowl*]

Three dogs of unbelievers, too!

[*Sharply*]

Give an account of yourselves!

BUDDHIST

I was proceeding westward on a business venture, good sir

MAGIAN

And I to the northward.

CHRISTIAN

And I to the court of Ghazan Khan to present this letter to Queen Kukachin. But I hear she's dead.

[*He hands him the letter but the* CAPTAIN *backs away superstitiously*]

CAPTAIN

Allah forbid I touch what belongs to a corpse.

[*Then with forced laughter*]

You need not journey farther. She is in there!

[*His voice has dropped, he points toward the coffin. The others stare at it, dumbfounded and awed. The* CAPTAIN *goes on dryly*]

You cannot cheat her now, Christian!

[*Then lowering his voice as if afraid he will be overheard*]

And yet, to look at her face you would think her only sleeping.

CHRISTIAN

[*Astonished*]

What? Can you look at her?

CAPTAIN

Her coffin is glass. Her body was anointed by Egyptians so that she preserves the appearance of life. This was done by command of her grandfather Kublai, the Great Kaan. She is being taken home to Cathay for burial—and under penalty of torture I must transport her over the first stage by dark tonight!

[*Suddenly lamenting*]

But Allah afflicted me! When I reached the last village with my camels foundering, I found the accursed villagers had driven off their beasts to escape requisition. But the dogs could not balk me. I hitched them to the pole instead.

[*He looks at the moaning figures with a cruel appraising eye*]

But will they last till night? Hi, there! Water to revive them!

[*The soldiers carry around jugs of water which the panting men reach out for avidly, then sink back. But three of the more elderly men are too spent to move*]

CHRISTIAN

[*Timorously—anxious to change the subject*]

Was the Queen very beautiful?

CAPTAIN

[*With bravado*]

Would you care to see? You had a letter to her. It can do no harm—and it is a very great wonder!

CHRISTIAN

[*Reassuringly, because he is now extremely curious*]

Dead Queens in the West usually lie in state.

CAPTAIN

You pull back the cloth then, since that is your custom.

[*The* CHRISTIAN *goes to the wagon and gingerly pulls back the pall from the head of the coffin—then retreats with an exclamation as* KUKACHIN'S *face, that of a beautiful Tartar princess of twenty-three, is revealed inside the glass. Her calm expression seems to glow with the intense peace of a life beyond death, the eyes are shut as if she were asleep. The men stare fascinatedly*]

CHRISTIAN

[*After a pause—crossing himself awedly*]

Are you certain she's dead?

CAPTAIN

[*In an awed whisper*]

In the palace I commanded the company who guarded her coffin at night. I could not take my eyes from her face. It seemed that any moment she must awake and speak!

[*While they have been speaking, unnoticed by them, it has grown dark. An unearthly glow, like a halo, lights up the face of* KUKACHIN. *From the branches of the tree*

comes a sound of sweet sad music as if the leaves were tiny harps strummed by the wind. The face of KUKACHIN *becomes more and more living. Finally her lips part and her eyes open to look up at the tree*]

CAPTAIN

[*Kneeling down to pray*]
Allah, be pitiful!

BUDDHIST

Buddha, protect Thy servant!

MAGIAN

Mithra, All-Powerful One!

CHRISTIAN

Jesus, have mercy!

[*A voice which is* KUKACHIN'S *and yet more musical than a human voice, comes from the coffin as her lips are seen to move*]

KUKACHIN

Say this, I loved and died. Now I am love, and live. And living, have forgotten. And loving, can forgive.

[*Here her lips part in a smile of beautiful pity*]
Say this for me in Venice!

[*A sound of tender laughter, of an intoxicating, supernatural gaiety, comes from her lips and is taken up in chorus in the branches of the tree as if every harp-leaf were laughing in music with her. The laughter recedes heavenward and dies as the halo of light about her face fades and noonday rushes back in a blaze of baking plain. Everyone is prostrate, the harnessed wretches in the exhausted attitudes of sleep, the others visibly trembling with superstitious horror*]

CHRISTIAN

[*The first to recover—bewilderedly*]

Venice! It must have been a message she wished me to take back to Marco Polo!

CAPTAIN

[*His terror going and rage taking its place, leaps to his feet*]

It was the voice of some Christian devil you summoned! It bewitched even me until Allah drove it back to hell!

[*He draws his sword*]

Cover her face, accursed sorcerer!

CHRISTIAN

[*Pulls the covering over the head of the coffin with indecent haste*]

I pledge you my word, good Captain—!

CAPTAIN

[*To his* SOLDIERS]

Attention! Kick them up! We must get away from here!

[*With blows and kicks the* SOLDIERS *get their human beasts to their feet. There are groans and curses and cries of pain. But three cannot be roused. The* CAPTAIN *growls savagely at the* CHRISTIAN *to keep up his courage.*

Pig of an infidel!

[*Then glaring at the* BUDDHIST *and* MAGIAN]

You too! You were in league with him!

[*He grips his sword*]

ALL THREE

[*Kneeling—pitiably*]

Mercy! Spare us!

A CORPORAL

[*Comes up and salutes*]

We cannot get three of them up, sir.

CAPTAIN

[*Raging*]

Lash them!

CORPORAL

They are dead, sir.

CAPTAIN

[*Glumly*]

Oh. (that's all it mattered!

[*Then an idea comes—with cruel satisfaction*]

Three, did you say? That is fortunate. Allah has provided! Cut them out and put these in their places!

[*At a sign, the* SOLDIERS *fall upon the three merchants, strip off their upper clothes, untie the dead men, and hitch them in their places. All the time the three set up miserable screams of protest, punctuated by the blows and kicks they receive. The others look on with exhausted indifference*]

CHRISTIAN

[*Making himself heard above the tumult*]

My letter! It was to the Queen! When Polo Brothers hear of this outrage they'll get the Kaan to flay you alive!

CAPTAIN

[*Taken aback a moment—then craftily*]

Show me your letter again!

CHRISTIAN

[*Holding it out with frantic eagerness*]

Here! Now set me free!

CAPTAIN

[*Takes it and calmly tears it up*]

I cannot read but I think you are lying. At any rate, now you have no letter!

[*The* CHRISTIAN *sets up a wailing cry and receives a blow. The* CAPTAIN *and* CORPORALS *spring up on the wagon*]

And now forward march!

[*With a great cracking of whips and shouts of pain the wagon is pulled swiftly away. On the ground under the sacred tree three bodies lie in crumpled heaps. The same sweet sad music comes from the tree again as if its spirit were playing on the leaves a last lamenting farewell to the dead* PRINCESS. *It rises softly and as softly dies away until it is nothing but a faint sound of wind rustling the leaves.*

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

Scene One

Scene: *Twenty-three years earlier. A fresh boy's voice is heard singing a love song in a subdued tone. The light slowly reveals the exterior of* Donata's *home on a canal, Venice.* Marco Polo, *a boy of fifteen, youthfully handsome and well made, is standing in a gondola beneath a barred window of the house, a guitar over his shoulder. The song finished, he waits anxiously. A hand is thrust out to him through the bars. He kisses it passionately. It is hurriedly withdrawn.* Donata's *face appears pressed against the bars. She is a girl of twelve, her face pale and pretty in the moonlight.*

DONATA

[*Coyly and tenderly*]

You mustn't, Mark.

MARCO

There's no harm in that—just kissing your hand!

DONATA

[*Demurely*]

It's a sin, I'm sure of it.

MARCO

[*With a quick movement of his own hand, captures hers through the bars*]

Then I'll have to steal it, and that's a worse sin.

[*He pulls her willing hand down toward his lips*]

DONATA

You're hurting my fingers.

MARCO

[*Boldly now*]

Then I know how to cure them.

[*He kisses them one by one*]

There!

DONATA

[*Tenderly*]

You silly boy! Why do you do that?

MARCO

[*Very seriously*]

You know, Donata.

DONATA

Know what?

[*Softly*]

Go on and tell me, Mark.

MARCO

[*Blurts out gruffly*]

I love you, that's what! I've loved you ever since I can remember. And you've known it right along, too, so there's no good pretending.

DONATA

[*Softly*]

I wasn't sure.

MARCO

[*Recklessly*]

And how about you? Do you love me? You've got to answer me that!

DONATA

You know—without my saying it.

MARCO

Please say it!

DONATA

[*In a whisper*]

I love you. There, silly!

MARCO

And you'll promise to marry me when I come back?

DONATA

Yes, but you'll have to ask my parents.

MARCO

[*Easily*]

Don't worry about them. They'll be glad, and my folks, too. It'll bring the two firms into closer contact.

DONATA

[*Practically*]

Yes, I think so, too.

[*A pause. Songs and music come from near and far-off in the night about them.* MARCO *has gained possession of her two hands now and his face is closer to the bars of her window*]

MARCO

[*With a sigh*]

It's beautiful tonight. I wish I didn't have to go away.

DONATA

I wish, too! Do you really have to?

MARCO

Yes. And I want to, too—all but leaving you. I want to travel and see the world and all the different people, and get to know

their habits and needs from first-hand knowledge. You've got to do that if you want to become really big and important. That's what Father says—and Uncle.

DONATA

But won't this trip so very far away be full of danger?

MARCO

[*Boastfully*]

I can take care of myself. Uncle says taking chances—*necessary* chances, of course—is the best schooling for a real merchant; and Father has a saying that where there's nothing risked, there's nothing gained. And they ought to know, oughtn't they, after spending nine years at the court of the Great Kaan and traveling there and back?

DONATA

Is that where you're going?

MARCO

Yes. He's the richest king in the world and Uncle and Father are personal friends of his. They did a lot of work for him. I'll be on the right side of him from the start, and Father and Uncle both say there's millions to be made in his service if you're not afraid of work and keep awake to opportunity.

DONATA

I'm sure you'll succeed. But I wish you weren't going for so long.

MARCO

I'll miss you as much as you miss me.

[*Huskily*]

I hate to leave you, Donata—but I've got to make my own way—so we can marry—

DONATA

[*Hurriedly*]

Yes—of course—only come back as soon as you can.

MARCO

But you'll wait, won't you, no matter how long?

DONATA

[*Solemnly*]

Yes, I swear to, Mark.

MARCO

And I swear by God I'll come back and marry you, and I'll always be true and never forget or do anything—

DONATA

[*Startled by a noise from within*]

Ssshh! There's someone moving inside. You'll have to go. Here.

[*She hands him a locket*]

It's a medallion of me painted by an artist who owed Father for spices and couldn't pay with money. Will you keep looking at this all the time you're away and never forget me?

MARCO

[*Kissing it passionately*]

Every day!

DONATA

And you'll write me?

MARCO

I promise. Every chance I get.

DONATA

[*Hesitatingly*]

Will you write me—a poem? I won't care how short it is if it's only a poem.

MARCO

I'll try, Donata. I'll do my best.

DONATA

I'll just love it to death, Mark!

[*Startledly*]

Ssshh! I hear it again. It must be Father. I've got to sneak back.

MARCO

[*Desperately*]

Won't you kiss me—let me really kiss you—just once—for good-bye?

DONATA

I mustn't.

MARCO

Just once—when I'm going so far away?

[*Desperately*]

I—I—I'll die if you don't!

DONATA

Well—just once.

[*The moonlight fades into darkness as their lips meet. Then from the darkness are their voices heard in hushed tones*]

Good-bye, Mark.

MARCO

Good-bye, Donata.

[*The sentimental singing voices and guitars are heard from all corners of the night in celebration of love. The sound gradually grows fainter and fainter, receding into the distance, as if* Marco *were already leaving Venice behind him*]

DARKNESS

ACT ONE

Scene Two

Scene: *Six months later. The tolling of a church bell is first heard. Then the interior of the Papal Legate's palace at Acre is revealed—a combination of church and government building.*

The Legate, Tedaldo, *a man of sixty with a strong, intelligent face, is seated on a sort of throne placed against the rear wall. On his right, stands a warrior noble, a* Knight-Crusader, *in full armor, leaning on his sword. On his left, a* Dominican Monk, *his adviser. On the left of the room is an altar with candles burning. On the right, an open portal with a sentry pacing up and down, spear in hand.*

The two elder Polos, Nicolo *and* Maffeo, *stand in attitudes of patient servility before the throne.* Marco's *father,* Nicolo, *is a small thin middle-aged man, with a dry, shrewd face.* Maffeo, Marco's *uncle, is around the same age, but he is tall and stout with a round, jovial face and small, cunning eyes. There is a strong general resemblance between both of them and* Marco. Marco *is sitting on a stool in the foreground, his body all screwed up into an awkward intensity, striving with all his might to compose a poem to* Donata, *but constantly distracted in spite of himself.*

TEDALDO

[*Bored but tolerantly*]

What can I do except advise you to be patient? I'm sure the Conclave of Cardinals must soon select a Pope.

NICOLO

Two years in session!

[*Then suddenly—consoled*]

Well, it's a new world's record, anyway.

MAFFEO

[*Shaking his head*]

This uncertainty is bad for trade.

TEDALDO

[*With a bored yawn*]

No doubt.

[*Then rather impatiently*]

Then, when your business so evidently calls you to the East, why delay longer? Why not simply explain to the Great Kaan, Kublai, that there was no Pope to whom you could deliver his message?

NICOLO

He mightn't understand. His instructions to us were pretty emphatic.

MAFFEO

To request the Pope to send him a hundred wise men of the West—

TEDALDO

[*Dryly*]

This Kublai is an optimist!

MAFFEO

—to argue with his Buddhists and Taoists and Confucians which religion in the world is best.

MONK

[*Outraged*]

Impudent ignoramus! Does he imagine the Church would stoop to such bickering?

TEDALDO

[*With a weary smile*]

I begin to think Kublai is a humorist, too.

MAFFEO

[*Craftily*]

It'd pay to convert him. He's the richest king in the world. He rules over millions of subjects, his empire covers millions of square miles of great undeveloped natural resources, his personal wealth in cash and jewels and goods alone easily runs into millions of millions!

MARCO

[*Stares at his uncle—then mutters fascinatedly*]

Millions!

[*Then, shaking away this interruption, bends to his writing again*]

TEDALDO

[*Wearily*]

I am bored with your millions, Messrs. Polo. Even if they are true, it is too much effort to conceive them.

[*They bow humbly and retire backward. His eyes following them listlessly* TEDALDO *sees* MARCO, *who at this moment is scratching himself, twisting and turning his legs and feet, tearing his hair in a perfect frenzy of balked inspiration.* TEDALDO *smiles and addresses him in an affectionate, humorous tone*]

God's mercy on you, Master Marco! Are you suddenly pos-

sessed by a devil—or is it only these infernal Mahometan fleas the Almighty sends us for our sins?

MARCO

[*Coming out of his fit—sheepishly*]

I'm only writing something.

MAFFEO

Mark is surprisingly quick at figures.

NICOLO

But still heedless. A dreamer!

[*To* MARCO, *with a condescending paternal air*]

What are you writing, son?

[*He and* MAFFEO *draw near* MARCO]

MARCO

[*More confused*]

Nothing, sir—just—something.

[*He tries to hide it*]

MAFFEO

Why are you so mysterious? Come, let's see.

MARCO

No—please, Uncle.

MAFFEO

[*With a sudden cunning motion, he snatches it from* MARCO'S *hand, glances at it and bursts into laughter*]

Look, Nicolo, look!

MARCO

[*Rebelliously*]

Give that back!

NICOLO

[*Sternly*]

Behave yourself, Mark!

[*To* MAFFEO]

What is it?

MAFFEO

See for yourself.

[*He hands it to him*]

Did you know you'd hatched a nightingale?

[*He laughs coarsely*]

[NICOLO *reads, a scornful grin coming to his lips*]

TEDALDO

Surely it cannot be a song he has written?

NICOLO

[*Going to him—laughing*]

A rhyme! A love poem, no less!

TEDALDO

[*Severely, as he takes the poem*]

Do not mock at him! Rather be grateful if a thistle can bring forth figs.

[MARCO *remains sullenly apart, shamefaced and angry, his fists clenched.* TEDALDO *reads—frowns—laughs—then smilingly to* NICOLO]

Your fear that this is a poem is—humn—exaggerated!

[*He reads amusedly as* MARCO *squirms*]

"You are lovely as the gold in the sun
Your skin is like silver in the moon
Your eyes are black pearls I have won.
I kiss your ruby lips and you swoon,
Smiling your thanks as I promise you
A large fortune if you will be true,
While I am away earning gold

And silver so when we are old
I will have a million to my credit
And in the meantime can easily afford
A big wedding that will do us credit
And start having children, bless the Lord!"

[*There is a roar of laughter in which* TEDALDO *joins.* MARCO *looks about for a hole into which to crawl.* TEDALDO *addresses him amusedly but with kindness*]

Come, Marco. Here is your poem. Your lady is a bit too mineral, your heaven of love a trifle monetary—but, never mind, you will be happier as a Polo than as a poet. Here.

[*He gives it to* MARCO. *The latter fiercely crumples it up and throws it on the floor and stamps on it*]

NICOLO

[*Approvingly*]

Sensibly done, my boy.

TEDALDO

[*Looking searchingly at* MARCO'S *face—gently*]

Perhaps I was too critical. Your poem had merits of its own. I am sure it would touch your lady's heart.

MARCO

[*With a great bluster of manliness*]

Oh, I don't mind your making fun. I can take a joke. It *was* silly. Poetry's all stupid, anyway. I was only trying it for fun, to see if I could. You won't catch me ever being such a fool again!

MONK

[*As a noise of shouting comes toward them*]

Ssstt! What's that?

[*The* KNIGHT *hurries to the portal*]

KNIGHT

Someone is running here, and a crowd behind. I hear them shouting "Pope."

MONK

Then the Conclave has chosen!

POLOS

[*Joyfully*]

At last!

[*The cries of many voices. The* SENTINEL *and* KNIGHT *admit the* MESSENGER *but push back the others*]

MESSENGER

[*Exhausted—falls on his knees before* TEDALDO, *holding out a sealed paper*]

I come from the Conclave. You were chosen. Your Holiness—

[*He falls fainting. The crowds cheer and sweep in*]

TEDALDO

[*Rising—pale and trembling*]

What does he say?

MONK

[*Has picked up the document—joyfully*]

See! The official seal! You are the Pope!

[*He kneels humbly*]

Your Holiness, let me be the first—

[*He kisses* TEDALDO'S *hand. All are kneeling now, their heads bowed. The bells of the churches begin to ring*]

TEDALDO

[*Raising his hands to heaven—dazedly*]

Lord, I am not worthy!

[*Then to those about him—tremblingly*]

Leave me. I must pray to God for strength—for guidance!

CROWD

[*In a clamor*]

Your blessing!

[TEDALDO, *with a simple dignity and power, blesses them. They back out slowly, the* MONK *and* KNIGHT *last. The* POLOS *group together in the foreground, holding a whispered conference.* TEDALDO *kneels before the altar*]

MAFFEO

Now that he's the Pope, if we could get an answer from him, we could start right away.

NICOLO

We couldn't hope for better weather.

MAFFEO

He seems to have taken a fancy to Mark. You speak to him, Mark.

MARCO

[*Unwillingly*]

He's praying.

MAFFEO

He'll have time enough for that, but with us time is money.

[*Giving the unwilling* MARCO *a push*]

This will test your nerve, Mark! Don't shirk!

MARCO

[*Gritting his teeth*]

All right. I'll show you I'm not scared!

[*He advances boldly toward the altar, stands there for a moment awkwardly as* TEDALDO *remains oblivious—then he falls on his knees—humbly but insistently*]

Your Holiness. Forgive me, Your Holiness—

TEDALDO

[*Turns to him and springs to his feet—imperiously*]

I wish to be alone!

[*Then as* MARCO *is shrinking back—more kindly*]

Well, what is it? I owe you a recompense, perhaps—for an injury.

MARCO

[*Stammeringly*]

Your Holiness—if you could give us some answer to deliver to the Great Kaan—we could start now—with such favorable weather—

TEDALDO

[*Amused in spite of himself*]

On the last day one of your seed will interrupt Gabriel to sell him another trumpet!

[*Then sardonically to the elder* POLOS]

I have no hundred wise men—nor one! Tell the Great Kaan he must have been imposed upon by your patriotic lies, or he could never make such a request.

POLOS

[*Terrified*]

But, Your Holiness, we dare not repeat— He'd have us killed!

TEDALDO

I will send him a monk or two. That is quite sufficient to convert a Tartar barbarian!

MAFFEO

But, Your Holiness, he's not a barbarian! Why, every plate on his table is solid gold!

TEDALDO

[*Smiling*]

And has he millions of plates, too?

[*Then with a sudden whimsicality*]

But if the monks fail, Master Marco can be my missionary. Let him set an example of virtuous Western manhood amid all the levities of paganism, shun the frailty of poetry, have a million to his credit, as he so beautifully phrased it, and I will wager a million of something or other myself that the Kaan will soon be driven to seek spiritual salvation somewhere! Mark my words, Marco will be worth a million wise men—in the cause of wisdom!

[*He laughs gaily, raising his hand over* MARCO'S *head*]

Go with my blessing! But what need have you for a blessing? You were born with success in your pocket!

[*With a last gesture he turns, going quickly out the door in rear*]

MAFFEO

[*As he goes—approvingly*]

Mark is making a good impression already!

NICOLO

Well, he's got a head on him!

MARCO

[*Beginning to swell out a bit matter-of-factly*]

Never mind about me. When do we start?

POLOS

[*Hurriedly*]

At once. Let's go and pack.

[*They go out left*]

Come, Mark! Hurry!

MARCO

I'm coming.

[*He waits, looks after them, picks up the crumpled poem, starts to hide it in his jacket, stops, mutters with brave self-contempt*]

Aw! You damn fool!

[*He throws the poem down again, starts to go, hesitates, suddenly turns back, picks it up, crams it into his doublet and runs wildly out the door. The scene fades into darkness. For a time the church bells, which have never ceased ringing, are heard acclaiming the new Pope; but the* Polos *proceed speedily on their journey and the sound is soon left behind them*]

DARKNESS

ACT ONE

Scene Three

Scene: *Light comes, gradually revealing the scene. In the rear is the front of a Mahometan mosque. Before the mosque, is a throne on which sits a Mahometan ruler. On the right, the inevitable warrior—on his left, the inevitable priest—the two defenders of the State. At the ruler's feet his wives crouch like slaves. Everything is jeweled, high-colored, gorgeous in this background. Squatted against the side walls, forming a sort of semi-circle with the throne at center, counting from left to right consecutively, are a mother nursing a baby, two children playing a game, a young girl and a young man in a loving embrace, a middle-aged couple, an aged couple, a coffin. All these Mahometan figures remain motionless. Only their eyes move, staring fixedly but indifferently at the* Polos, *who are standing at center.* Marco *is carrying in each hand bags which curiously resemble modern sample cases. He sets these down and gazes around with a bewildered awe.*

NICOLO

[*Turning on him—genially*]

Well, son, here we are in Islam.

MARCO

[*Round-eyed*]

A man told me that Noah's Ark is still somewhere around here on top of a mountain.

[*Eagerly*]

And he proved it to me, too. Look!

[*He shows them a piece of wood*]

He broke this off of the Ark. See, it's got Noah's initials on it!

MAFFEO

[*Grimly*]

How much did you pay him for it?

MARCO

Ten soldi in silver.

NICOLO

[*Dashing it out of* MARCO'S *hand—bitterly*)

Muttonhead! Do you suppose Almighty God would allow infidels to cut up Noah's Ark into souvenirs to sell to Christians?

MAFFEO

[*Teasingly*]

Your son and your money are soon parted, Brother.

[*Then placatingly*]

But he's only a boy. He'll learn. And before we go farther, Nicolo, we better read him from the notes we made on our last trip all there is to remember about this corner of the world.

NICOLO

[*They take out note-books closely resembling a modern business man's date-book and read*]

We're now passing through Kingdoms where they worship Mahomet.

MAFFEO

There's one kingdom called Musul and in it a district of Baku where there's a great fountain of oil. There's a growing demand for it.

[*Then speaking*]

Make a mental note of that.

MARCO

Yes, sir.

NICOLO

Merchants make great profits. The people are simple creatures. It's very cold in winter. The women wear cotton drawers. This they do to look large in the hips, for the men think that a great beauty.

[*The two* MAHOMETAN MERCHANTS *enter from the left.* MAFFEO *recognizes them immediately—in a swift aside to his brother*]

MAFFEO

There's those damned Ali brothers. They'll cut under our prices with their cheap junk as usual.

[*The* ALI *brothers have seen the* POLOS *and a whispered aside, evidently of the same nature, passes between them. Then simultaneously the two firms advance to meet each other putting on expressions of the utmost cordiality*]

Well, well. You folks are a welcome sight!

ONE ALI

My dear, dear friends! Praise be to Allah!

[*They embrace*]

MAFFEO

[*With a cunning smirk*]

Selling a big bill of goods hereabouts, I'll wager, you old rascals?

THE OLDER ALI

[*Airily*]

My dear friend, don't speak of business. But you, you are on a venture to the court of the Great Kaan, we hear?

MAFFEO

What lies get around! Nothing in it—absolutely nothing!

NICOLO

For heaven's sake, let's not talk business! Let's have a nice friendly chat.

[*The four squat together in a circle*]

MAFFEO

[*With a wink*]

I'll tell you a good one an Armenian doily-dealer told me down in Bagdad.

[*They all bend their heads toward him with expectant grins. He looks around—then begins in a cautious lowered tone*]

Well, there was an old Jew named Ikey and he married a young girl named Rebecca—

[*He goes on telling the rest of the story with much exaggerated Jewish pantomime but in a voice too low to be heard. In the meantime,* MARCO *has slipped off, full of curiosity and wonder, to look at this strange life. He goes first to the left, stops before the mother and baby, smiles down at it uncertainly, then bends down to take hold of its hand*]

MARCO

Hello!

[*Then to the mother*]

He's fat as butter!

[*Both remain silent and motionless, staring at him from a great distance with indifferent calm.* MARCO *is rebuffed, grows embarrassed, turns away to the children, who, frozen in the midst of their game of jackstraws, are looking at him.* MARCO *adopts a lofty condescending air*]

Humh! Do you still play that game here? I remember it—when I was a kid.

[*They stare silently. He mutters disgustedly*]

Thickheads!

[*And turns to the lovers who with their arms about each other, cheek to cheek, stare at him. He looks at them, fascinated and stirred, and murmurs enviously*]

She's pretty. I suppose they're engaged—like Donata and me.

[*He fumbles and pulls out the locket which is hung around his neck on a ribbon*]

Donata's prettier.

[*Then embarrassedly, he holds it out for them to see*]

Don't you think she's pretty? She and I are going to be married some day.

[*They do not look except into his eyes. He turns away, hurt and angry*]

Go to the devil, you infidels!

[*He stuffs the locket back—stops before the throne—tries to stare insolently at the king but, awed in spite of himself, makes a grudging bow and passes on, stops before*

the family group, sneers and passes on, stops before the old couple and cannot restrain his curiosity]

Would you tell me how old you are?

[*He passes on, rebuffed again, stops fascinatedly before the coffin, leans out and touches it with defiant daring, shudders superstitiously and shrinks away, going to the merchant group who are roaring with laughter as* MAFFEO *ends his story*]

THE OLDER ALI

[*To* NICOLO]

Your son?

NICOLO

Yes, and a chip of the old block.

THE OLDER ALI

Will he follow in your footsteps?

NICOLO

[*Jocosely*]

Yes, and you better look out then! He's as keen as a hawk already.

THE OLDER ALI

[*With a trace of a biting smile*]

He greatly resembles a youth I saw back on the road buying a piece of Noah's Ark from a wayside sharper.

MAFFEO

[*Hastily coming to the rescue as* NICOLO *cannot hide his chagrin—boastfully*]

It wasn't Mark. Mark would have sold him the lions of St. Mark's for good mousers!

[*The* PROSTITUTE *enters from the right. She is painted,*

half-naked, alluring in a brazen, sensual way. She smiles at MARCO *enticingly*]

MARCO

[*With a gasp*]

Look! Who's that?

[*They all turn, and, recognizing her, laugh with coarse familiarity*]

MAFFEO

[*Jokingly*]

So here you are again. You're like a bad coin—always turning up.

PROSTITUTE

[*Smiling*]

Shut up. You can bet it isn't old fools like you that turn me.

NICOLO

[*With a lecherous grin at her*]

No? But it's the old who have the money.

PROSTITUTE

Money isn't everything, not always. Now I wouldn't ask money from him.

[*She points to* MARCO]

NICOLO

[*Crossly and jealously*]

Leave him alone, you filth!

MAFFEO

[*Broad-mindedly*]

Come, come, Nicolo. Let the boy have his fling.

PROSTITUTE

[*Her eyes on* MARCO]

Hello, Handsome.

MARCO

[*Bewilderedly*]

You've learned our language?

PROSTITUTE

I sell to all nations.

MARCO

What do you sell?

PROSTITUTE

[*Mockingly*]

A precious jewel. Myself.

[*Then desirously*]

But for you I'm a gift.

[*Putting her hands on his shoulders and lifting her lips*]

Why don't you kiss me?

MARCO

[*Terribly confused—strugglingly*]

I—I don't know—I mean, I'm sorry but—you see I promised someone I'd never—

[*Suddenly freeing himself—frightenedly*]

Leave go! I don't want your kisses.

[*A roar of coarse taunting laughter from the men.* MARCO *runs away, off Left*]

NICOLO

[*Between his teeth*]

What a dolt!

MAFFEO

[*Slapping the* PROSTITUTE *on the bare shoulder*]

Better luck next time. He'll learn!

PROSTITUTE

[*Trying to hide her pique—forcing a cynical smile*]

Oh, yes, but I won't be a gift then. I'll make him pay, just to show him!

[*She laughs harshly and goes out Left. A pause. All four squat again in silence*]

THE OLDER ALI

[*Suddenly*]

Many wonders have come to pass in these regions. They relate that in old times three kings from this country went to worship a Prophet that was born and they carried with them three manner of offerings—Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh—and when they had come to the place where the Child was born, they marveled and knelt before him.

MAFFEO

That's written in the Bible. The child was Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[*He blesses himself,* NICOLO *does likewise*]

THE OLDER ALI

Your Jesus was a great prophet.

NICOLO

[*Defiantly*]

He was the Son of God!

BOTH ALIS

[*Stubbornly*]

There is no God but Allah!

[*A strained pause. A dervish of the desert runs in shrieking and begins to whirl. No one is surprised except the two* POLOS *who get up to gape at him with the thrilled appreciation inspired by a freak in a sideshow.* MARCO *comes back and joins them*]

MAFFEO

[*With appreciation*]

If we had him in Venice we could make a mint of money exhibiting him.

[NICOLO *nods*]

MARCO

I'll have to write Donata all about this.

[*Wonderingly*]

Is he crazy?

MAFFEO

[*In a low aside to him*]

My boy, all Mahometans are crazy. That's the only charitable way to look at it.

[*Suddenly the call to prayer sounds from Muezzins in the minarets of the mosque. The* DERVISH *falls on his face. Everyone sinks into the attitude of prayer except the* POLOS *who stand embarrassedly, not knowing what to do*]

MARCO

Are they praying?

NICOLO

Yes, they call it that. Much good it does them!

MAFFEO

Ssshh! Come! This is a good time to move on again. Marco! Wake up!

[*They go quickly out Right,* MARCO *following with the sample cases. The scene fades quickly into darkness as the call of the Muezzins is heard again*]

DARKNESS

ACT ONE

Scene Four

Scene: *The slowly-rising light reveals an Indian snake-charmer squatted on his haunches at center. A snake is starting to crawl from the basket in front of him, swaying its head to the thin, shrill whine of a gourd. Otherwise, the scene, in the placing of its people and the characters and types represented, is the exact duplicate of the last except that here the locale is Indian. The background for the ruler's throne is now a Buddhist temple instead of a mosque. The motionless staring figures are all Indians. Looming directly above and in back of the ruler's throne is an immense Buddha. The* Polos *stand at center as before,* Marco *still lugging the sample cases. He is seventeen now. Some of the freshness of youth has worn off. They stare at the snake-charmer, the two older men cynically.* Marco *gasps with enthralled horror.*

MARCO

Look at that deadly snake!

MAFFEO

[*Cynically*]

He's a fake, like everything else here. His fangs have been pulled out.

MARCO

[*Disillusioned*]

Oh!

[*He turns away. The snake-charmer glares at them, stops playing, pushes his snake back into the box and carries it off, after spitting on the ground at their feet with angry disgust.* MARCO *sits on one of the cases and glances about with a forced scorn; looks finally at the Buddha—in a smart-Aleck tone*]

So that is Buddha!

NICOLO

[*Begins to read from his note-book*]

These people are idolaters. The climate is so hot if you put an egg in their rivers it will be boiled.

MAFFEO

[*Taking up the reading from his book in the same tone*]

The merchants make great profits. Ginger, pepper, and indigo. Largest sheep in the world. Diamonds of great size. The Kings have five hundred wives apiece.

MARCO

[*Disgustedly*]

It's too darn hot here!

MAFFEO

[*Warningly*]

Sshhh! Don't let the natives hear you. Remember any climate is healthy where trade is brisk.

MARCO

[*Walks sullenly off to left. At the same moment two merchants, this time Buddhists, come in. The same interplay goes on with them as with the* ALI BROTHERS *in the previous scene, only this time it is all done in pantomime until the loud laughter at the end of* MAFFEO'S *story. As* MAFFEO *tells the story,* MARCO *is looking at*

the people but this time he assumes the casual, indifferent attitude of the worldly-wise. He makes a silly gesture to attract the baby's attention, passes by the two children with only a contemptuous glance, but stops and stares impudently at the lovers—finally spits with exaggerated scorn]

Where do you think you are—home with the light out? Why don't you charge admission?

[*He stalks on—pauses before the middle-aged couple who have a bowl of rice between them—in astonishment as though this evidence of a humanity common with his struck him as strange*]

Real rice!

[*He ignores the throne, passes quickly by the old people with a glance of aversion and very obviously averts his head from the coffin. As he returns to the group at center,* MAFFEO *has just finished his story. There is a roar of laughter*]

MARCO

[*Grinning eagerly*]

What was it, Uncle?

MAFFEO

[*Grinning teasingly*]

You're too young.

MARCO

[*Boastfully*]

Is that so?

NICOLO

[*Severely*]

Mark!

[*The* PROSTITUTE, *the same but now in Indian garb, has entered from Left and comes up behind* MARCO]

PROSTITUTE

A chip of the old block, Nicolo!

NICOLO

[*Angrily*]

You again!

MARCO

[*Pleased to see her—embarrassedly*]

Why, hello.

PROSTITUTE

[*Cynically*]

I knew you'd want to see me.

[*She raises her lips*]

Will you kiss me now?

[*As he hesitates*]

Forget your promise. You know you want to

MAFFEO

[*Grinning*]

There's no spirit in the youngsters nowadays. I'll bet he won't.

PROSTITUTE

[*Her eyes on* MARCO'S]

How much will you bet?

MAFFEO

Ten—

[MARCO *suddenly kisses her*]

PROSTITUTE

[*Turning to* MAFFEO]

I win, Uncle.

MARCO

[*With a grin*]

No. I kissed you before he said ten what.

MAFFEO

That's right! Good boy, Mark!

PROSTITUTE

[*Turning to* MARCO—*cynically*]

You're learning, aren't you? You're becoming shrewd even about kisses. You need only me now to make you into a real man—for ten pieces of gold.

MARCO

[*Genuinely overcome by a sudden shame*]

No, please.—I—I didn't mean it. It was only in fun.

PROSTITUTE

[*With a sure smile*]

Later, then—when we meet again.

[*She walks off Left*]

MARCO

[*Looks after her. As she evidently turns to look back at him, he waves his hand and grins—then abashed*]

She's pretty. It's too bad she's—what she is.

MAFFEO

Don't waste pity. Her kind are necessary evils. All of us are human.

[*A long pause*]

THE OLDER BUDDHIST MERCHANT

[*Suddenly*]

The Buddha taught that one's loving-kindness should embrace all forms of life, that one's compassion should suffer with the suffering, that one's sympathy should understand all things, and

last that one's judgment should regard all persons and things as of equal importance.

NICOLO

[*Harshly*]

Who was this Buddha?

THE OLDER BUDDHIST MERCHANT

The Incarnation of God.

NICOLO

You mean Jesus?

THE OLDER BUDDHIST MERCHANT

[*Unheedingly*]

He was immaculately conceived. The Light passed into the womb of Maya, and she bore a son who, when he came to manhood, renounced wife and child, riches and power, and went out as a beggar on the roads to seek the supreme enlightenment which would conquer birth and death; and at last he attained the wisdom where all desire has ended and experienced the heaven of peace, Nirvana. And when he died he became a God again.

[*The temple bells begin to ring in chorus. All except the* POLOS *prostrate themselves before the Buddha*]

MARCO

[*To his uncle—in a whispered chuckle*]

Died and became a God? So that's what they believe about that stone statue, is it?

MAFFEO

They're all crazy, like the Mahometans. They're not responsible.

MARCO

[*Suddenly*]

I saw two of them with a bowl of rice—

MAFFEO

Oh, yes. They eat the same as we do.

[*Then abruptly*]

Come on! This is our chance to make a start. Don't forget our cases, Mark.

[*They go out Left followed by* MARCO *with the sample cases. The scene fades into darkness. The clamor of the temple bells slowly dies out in the distance*]

DARKNESS

ACT ONE

Scene Five

Scene: *From the darkness comes the sound of a small Tartar kettledrum, its beats marking the rhythm for a crooning, nasal voice, rising and falling in a wordless chant.*

The darkness gradually lifts. In the rear is a section of the Great Wall of China with an enormous shut gate. It is late afternoon, just before sunset. Immediately before the gate is a rude throne on which sits a Mongol ruler with warrior and sorcerer to right and left of him. At the sides are Mongol circular huts. The motionless figures sit before these. The Minstrel, *squatting at center, is the only one whose body moves. In the back of the throne and above it is a small idol made of felt and cloth. The clothes of the ruler and his court are of rich silk stuffs, lined with costly furs. The squatting figures of the people are clothed in rough robes.*

The Polos *stand at center,* Marco *still lugging the battered sample cases. He is now nearly eighteen, a brash, self-confident young man, assertive and talky. All the* Polos *are weary and their clothes shabby and travel-worn*]

MARCO

[*Setting down the bags with a thump and staring about with an appraising contempt*]

Welcome to that dear old Motherland, Mongolia!

MAFFEO

[*Wearily takes out his guide-book and begins to read in the monotone of a boring formula*]

Flocks—goats—horses—cattle. The women do all the buying and selling. Business is all in cattle and crops. In short, the people live like beasts.

NICOLO

[*Reading from his book*]

They have two Gods—a God of Heaven to whom they pray for health of mind, and a God of Earth who watches over their earthly goods. They pray to him also and do many other stupid things.

MARCO

[*Boredly*]

Well—let them!

[*He walks away and makes the circuit of the figures, but now he hardly glances at them. The* Two Tartar Merchants *enter and there is the same pantomime of greeting between them and the* Polos *as with the* Buddhist Merchants *in the previous scene.* Marco *joins them. It is apparent the whole company is extremely weary. They yawn and prepare to lie down*]

MAFFEO

We'll have time to steal a nap before they open the Gate.

MARCO

[*With an assertive importance*]

Just a moment! I've got a good one an idol-polisher told me in Tibet. This is the funniest story you ever heard! It seems an Irishman got drunk in Tangut and wandered into a temple

where he mistook one of the female statues for a real woman and—

[*He goes on, laughing and chuckling to himself, with endless comic pantomime. The two* TARTAR MERCHANTS *fall asleep.* NICOLO *stares at his son bitterly,* MAFFEO *with contemptuous pity. Finally* MARCO *finishes to his own uproarious amusement*]

NICOLO

[*Bitterly*]

Dolt!

MAFFEO

[*Mockingly. With a yawn*]

Youth will have its laugh!

[MARCO *stops open-mouthed and stares from one to the other*]

MARCO

[*Faintly*]

What's the matter?

NICOLO

[*Pettishly*]

Unless your jokes improve you'll never sell anything.

MAFFEO

I'll have to give Marco some lessons in how to tell a short story.

[*Warningly*]

And until I pronounce you graduated, mum's the word, understand! The people on the other side of that wall may look simple but they're not.

[*The* PROSTITUTE *enters dressed now as a Tartar. She comes and puts her hand on* MARCO's *head*]

PROSTITUTE

What has this bad boy been doing now?

MAFFEO

He's getting too witty!

[*He rests his head on his arms and goes to sleep*]

PROSTITUTE

Shall I expect you again tonight?

MARCO

No. You've got all my money.

[*Suddenly gets to his feet and faces her—disgustedly*]

And I'm through with you, anyway.

PROSTITUTE

[*With a scornful smile*]

And I with you—now that you're a man.

[*She turns away*]

MARCO

[*Angrily*]

Listen here! Give me back what you stole! I know I had it on a ribbon around my neck last night and this morning it was gone.

[*Threateningly*]

Give it to me, you, or I'll make trouble!

PROSTITUTE

[*Takes a crumpled paper from her bosom*]

Do you mean this?

MARCO

[*Tries to snatch it*]

No!

PROSTITUTE

[*She unfolds it and reads*]

"I'll have a million to my credit
And in the meantime can easily afford
A big wedding that will do us credit
And start having children, Bless the Lord!"

[*She laughs*]

Are you a poet, too?

MARCO

[*Abashed and furious*]

I didn't write that.

PROSTITUTE

You're lying. You must have. Why deny it? Don't sell your soul for nothing. That's bad business.

[*She laughs, waving the poem in her upraised hand, staring mockingly*]

Going! Going! Gone!

[*She lets it fall and grinds it under her feet into the earth—laughing*]

Your soul! Dead and buried! You strong man!

[*She laughs*]

MARCO

[*Threateningly*]

Give me what was wrapped up in that, d'you hear!

PROSTITUTE

[*Scornfully. Takes the miniature from her bosom*]

You mean this? I was bringing it back to you. D'you think I want her ugly face around? Here!

[*She throws it at his feet. He leans down and picks it up, polishing it on his sleeve remorsefully. The* PROSTITUTE, *walking away, calls back over her shoulder*]

I kissed it so you'd remember my kiss whenever you kiss her!

[*She laughs.* MARCO *starts as if to run after her angrily. Suddenly a shout rises from the lips of all the Tartars,* the MINSTREL *and his drum become silent, and with one accord they raise their arms and eyes to the sky. Then the* MINSTREL *chants*]

MINSTREL

God of the Heaven, be in our souls!

[*Then they all prostrate themselves on the ground as he chants*]

God of the Earth, be in our bodies!

[*The Tartars sit up. The* MINSTREL *begins again his drum beat, crooning in a low monotone. The* POLOS *rise and stretch sleepily*]

MARCO

[*Inquisitively*]

Two Gods? Are they in one Person like our Holy Trinity?

MAFFEO

[*Shocked*]

Don't be impious! These are degraded pagans—or crazy, that's a more charitable way to—

[*From behind the wall comes the sound of martial Chinese music. The gate opens. The blinding glare of the setting sun floods in from beyond. A file of soldiers, accompanying a richly-dressed* COURT MESSENGER, *come through. He walks directly up to the* POLOS *and bows deeply*]

MESSENGER

The Great Kaan, Lord of the World, sent me—

[*He looks around*]

But where are the hundred wise men of the West?

NICOLO

[*Confusedly*]

We had two monks to start with—but they left us and went back.

MAFFEO

[*Warningly*]

Ssst!

MESSENGER

[*Indifferently*]

You will explain to the Kaan. I was ordered to arrange a welcome for them.

MAFFEO

[*Claps him on the back*]

Well, here we are—and hungry as hunters! So your welcome will be welcome, Brother.

[*The* MESSENGER *bows, starts back, the* POLOS *following him,* MAFFEO *calling*]

Get on the job, Mark!

[*They pass through the gate*]

MARCO

[*Wearily picks up the cases—then goading himself on*]

Giddap! Cathay or bust!

[*He struggles through the gate. For a second he is framed in it, outlined against the brilliant sky, tugging a sample case in each hand. Then the gate shuts, the light fades out. The drum beat and the chanting recede into the distance*]

DARKNESS

ACT ONE

Scene Six

Scene: *Music from full Chinese and Tartar bands crashes up to a tremendous blaring crescendo of drums, gongs, and the piercing shrilling of flutes. The light slowly comes to a pitch of blinding brightness. Then, as light and sound attain their highest point, there is a sudden dead silence. The scene is revealed as the Grand Throne Room in the palace of Kublai, the Great Kaan, in the city of Cambaluc, Cathay—an immense octagonal room, the lofty walls adorned in gold and silver. In the far rear wall, within a deep recess like the shrine of an idol, is the throne of the Great Kaan. It rises in three tiers, three steps to a tier. On golden cushions at the top* Kublai *sits dressed in his heavy gold robes of state. He is a man of sixty but still in the full prime of his powers, his face proud and noble, his expression tinged with an ironic humor and bitterness yet full of a sympathetic humanity. In his person are combined the conquering indomitable force of a descendant of Chinghiz with the humanizing culture of the conquered Chinese who have already begun to absorb their conquerors.*

On the level of the throne below Kublai are: on his right a Mongol warrior in full armor with shield and spear, his face grim, cruel and fierce. On his left Chu-Yin, *the Ca-*

thayan sage and adviser to the Kaan, a venerable old man with white hair, dressed in a simple black robe.

On the main floor, grouped close to the throne are: on the right, the sons of the Kaan. Farther away, the nobles and warriors of all degrees with their wives behind them. On the left, the wives and concubines of the Kaan, then the courtiers, officers, poets, scholars, etc.—all the non-military officials and hangers-on of government, with their women beside them.

MARCO *stands, a sample case in each hand, bewildered and dazzled, gawking about him on every side. His father and uncle, bowing, walk to the foot of the throne and kneel before the Kaan. They make frantic signals to* MARCO *to do likewise but he is too dazed to notice. All the people in the room are staring at him. The Kaan is looking at the two brothers with a stern air. An usher of the palace comes quietly to* MARCO *and makes violent gestures to him to kneel down.*

MARCO

[*Misunderstanding him—gratefully*]

Thank you, Brother.

[*He sits down on one of the sample cases to the gasping horror of all the Court. The Kaan is still looking frowningly at the two* POLOS *as he listens to the report of their Messenger escort. He does not notice. An outraged Chamberlain rushes over to* MARCO *and motions him to kneel down*]

MARCO

[*Bewilderedly*]

What's the trouble now?

KUBLAI

[*Dismissing the* MESSENGER, *having heard his report—addresses the* POLOS *coldly*]

I bid you welcome, Messrs. Polo. But where are the hundred wise men of the West who were to dispute with my wise men of the sacred teachings of Lao-Tseu and Confucius and the Buddha and Christ?

MAFFEO

[*Hurriedly*]

There was no Pope elected until just before—

NICOLO

And he had no wise men, anyway.

[*The Kaan now sees* MARCO *and a puzzled expression of interest comes over his face*]

KUBLAI

Is he with you?

NICOLO

[*Hesitantly*]

My son, Marco, your Majesty—still young and graceless.

KUBLAI

Come here, Marco Polo.

[MARCO *comes forward, trying feebly to assume a bold, confident air*]

MAFFEO

[*In a loud, furious aside*]

Kneel, you ass!

[MARCO *flounders to his knees*]

KUBLAI

[*With a smile*]

I bid you welcome, Master Marco.

MARCO

Thank you, sir—I mean, your Lordship—your—

[*Then suddenly*]

Before I forget—the Pope gave me a message for you, sir.

KUBLAI

[*Smiling*]

Are you his hundred wise men?

MARCO

[*Confidently*]

Well—almost. He sent me in their place. He said I'd be worth a million wise men to you.

NICOLO

[*Hastily*]

His Holiness meant that Marco, by leading an upright life—not neglecting the practical side, of course—might set an example that would illustrate, better than wise words, the flesh and blood product of our Christian civilization.

KUBLAI

[*With a quiet smile*]

I shall study this apotheosis with unwearied interest, I foresee it.

MARCO

[*Suddenly—with a confidential air*]

Wasn't that just a joke, your asking for the wise men? His Holiness thought you must have a sense of humor. Or that you must be an optimist.

KUBLAI

[*With a smile of appreciation*]

I am afraid your Holy Pope is a most unholy cynic.

[*Trying to solve a riddle in his own mind—musingly*]

Could he believe this youth possesses that thing called soul which the West dreams lives after death—and might reveal it to me?

[*Suddenly to* MARCO]

Have you an immortal soul?

MARCO

[*In surprise*]

Of course! Any fool knows that.

KUBLAI

[*Humbly*]

But I am not a fool. Can you prove it to me?

MARCO

Why, if you didn't have a soul, what would happen when you die?

KUBLAI

What, indeed?

MARCO

Why, nothing. You'd be dead—just like an animal.

KUBLAI

Your logic is irrefutable.

MARCO

Well, I'm not an animal, am I? That's certainly plain enough.

[*Then proudly*]

No, sir! I'm a man made by Almighty God in His Own Image for His greater glory!

KUBLAI

[*Staring at him for a long moment with appalled appreciation—ecstatically*]

So you are the Image of God! There is certainly something

about you, something complete and unanswerable—but wait—a test!

[*He claps his hands, pointing to* MARCO. *Soldiers with drawn swords leap forward and seize him, trussing up his hands behind his back*]

MAFFEO

[*Groveling*]

Mercy! He is only a boy!

NICOLO

[*Groveling*]

Mercy! He is only a fool!

KUBLAI

[*Sternly*]

Silence!

[*To* MARCO, *with inhuman calm*]

Since you possess eternal life, it can do you no harm to cut off your head.

[*He makes a sign to a soldier who flourishes his sword*]

MARCO

[*Trying to conceal his fear under a quavering, joking tone*]

I might—catch—cold!

KUBLAI

You jest, but your voice trembles. What! Are you afraid to die, immortal youth? Well, then, if you will confess that your soul is a stupid invention of your fear and that when you die you will be dead as a dead dog is dead—

MARCO

[*With sudden fury*]

You're a heathen liar!

[*He glares defiantly. His father and uncle moan with horror*]

KUBLAI

[*Laughs and claps his hands.* MARCO *is freed. The Kaan studies his sullen but relieved face with amusement*]

Your pardon, Marco! I suspected a flaw but you are perfect. You cannot imagine your death. You are a born hero. I must keep you near me. You shall tell me about your soul and I will listen as to a hundred wise men from the West! Is it agreed?

MARCO

[*Hesitatingly*]

I know it's a great honor, sir—but forgetting the soul side of it, I've got to eat.

KUBLAI

[*Astonished*]

To eat?

MARCO

I mean, I'm ambitious. I've got to succeed, and—

[*Suddenly blurts out*]

What can you pay me?

KUBLAI

Ha! Well, you will find me a practical man, too. I can start you upon any career you wish. What is your choice?

MAFFEO

[*Interposing eagerly*]

If I might speak to the boy in private a minute—give him my humble advice—he is so young—

[MAFFEO *and* NICOLO *hurriedly lead* MARCO *down to the foreground*]

MAFFEO

You've made a favorable impression—God knows why—but strike while the iron is hot, you ninny! Ask to be appointed a Second Class government commission-agent.

MARCO

[*Offendedly*]

No! I'll be first-class or nothing!

MAFFEO

Don't be a fool! A First Class agent is all brass buttons and no opportunities. A Second Class travels around, is allowed his expenses, gets friendly with all the dealers, scares them into letting him in on everything—and gets what's rightfully coming to him!

[*Then with a crafty look and a nudge in the ribs*]

And, being always in the secret, you'll be able to whisper to us in time to take advantage—

MARCO

[*A bit flustered—with bluff assertion*]

I don't know. The Kaan's been square with me. After all, honesty's the best policy, isn't it?

MAFFEO

[*Looking him over scathingly*]

You'd think I was advising you to steal—I, Maffeo Polo, whose conservatism is unquestioned!

MARCO

[*Awed*]

I didn't mean—

MAFFEO

[*Solemnly*]

Do you imagine the Kaan is such a Nero as to expect you to live on your salary?

MARCO

[*Uncertainly*]

No, I suppose not.

[*He suddenly looks at* MAFFEO *with a crafty wink*]

When I do give you a tip, what do I get from Polo Brothers?

MAFFEO

[*Between appreciation and dismay*]

Ha! You learn quickly, don't you?

[*Then hastily*]

Why, we—we've already thought of that—trust us to look after your best interests—and decided to—to make you a junior partner in the firm—eh, Nick?—Polo Brothers and Son—doesn't that sound solid, eh?

MARCO

[*With a sly grin*]

It's a great honor—a very great honor.

[*Then meaningly*]

But as neither of you are Neros, naturally you'll also offer me—

MAFFEO

[*Grinning in spite of himself*]

Hmm! Hmm! You Judas!

MARCO

A fair commission—

NICOLO

[*Blustering—but his eyes beaming with paternal pride*]

You young scamp!

MAFFEO

[*Laughing*]

Ha-ha! Good boy, Mark! Polos will be Polos!

[*They all embrace laughingly.* KUBLAI, *who has been observing them intently, turns to* CHU-YIN *and they both smile*]

KUBLAI

Did their Pope mean that a fool is a wiser study for a ruler of fools than a hundred wise men could be? This Marco touches me, as a child might, but at the same time there is something warped, deformed— Tell me, what shall I do with him?

CHU-YIN

Let him develop according to his own inclination and give him also every opportunity for true growth if he so desires. And let us observe him. At least, if he cannot learn, we shall.

KUBLAI

[*Smilingly*]

Yes. And be amused.

[*He calls commandingly*]

Marco Polo!

[MARCO *turns rather frightenedly and comes to the throne and kneels*]

Have you decided?

MARCO

[*Promptly*]

I'd like to be appointed a commission-agent of the Second Class.

KUBLAI

[*Somewhat taken aback, puzzledly*]

You are modest enough!

MARCO

[*Manfully*]

I want to start at the bottom!

KUBLAI

[*With mocking grandeur*]

Arise then, Second Class Marco! You will receive your agent's commission at once.

[*Then with a twinkle in his eye*]

But each time you return from a journey you must relate to me all the observations and comments of your soul on the East. Be warned and never fail me in this!

MARCO

[*Confused but cocksuredly*]

I won't. I'll take copious notes.

[*Then meaningly*]

And I can memorize any little humorous incidents—

MAFFEO

[*Apprehensively*]

Blessed Savior!

[*He gives a violent fit of coughing*]

MARCO

[*Looks around at him questioningly*]

Hum?

[*Misinterpreting his signal*]

And may I announce to your Majesty that a signal honor has just been conferred on me? My father and uncle have taken me into the firm. It will be Polo Brothers and Son from now on, and any way we can serve your Majesty—

KUBLAI

[*A light coming over his face*]

Aha! I begin to smell all the rats in Cathay!

[*The two elder* POLOS *are bowed to the ground, trembling with apprehension.* KUBLAI *laughs quietly*]

Well, I am sure you wish to celebrate this family triumph together, so you may go. And accept my congratulations, Marco!

MARCO

Thank you, your Majesty. You will never regret it. I will always serve your best interests, so help me God!

[*He goes grandly, preceded hurriedly by the trembling* NICOLO *and* MAFFEO. KUBLAI *laughs and turns to* CHU-YIN *who is smiling*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

Scene One

Scene: *The Little Throne Room in the bamboo summer palace of the Kaan at Xanadu, the City of Peace—smaller, more intimate than the one at Cambaluc, but possessing an atmosphere of aloof dignity and simplicity fitting to the philosopher ruler who retreats here to contemplate in peace the vanity of his authority.*

About fifteen years have elapsed. It is a beautiful sunlit morning in late June. The Kaan reclines comfortably on his cushioned bamboo throne. His face has aged greatly. The expression has grown mask-like, full of philosophic calm. He has the detached air of an idol. Kukachin, *a beautiful young girl of twenty, pale and delicate, is sitting at his feet. Her air is grief-stricken. A flute player in the garden is playing a melancholy air.* Kukachin *recites in a low tone:*

KUKACHIN

My thoughts in this autumn are lonely and sad,
A chill wind from the mountain blows in the garden.
The sky is gray, a snowflake falls, the last chrysanthemum
Withers beside the deserted summer-house.
I walk along the path in which weeds have grown.
My heart is bitter and tears blur my eyes.
I grieve for the days when we lingered together

In this same garden, along these paths between flowers.
In the spring we sang of love and laughed with youth
But now we are parted by many leagues and years,
And I weep that never again shall I see your face.

[*She finishes and relapses into her attitude of broken resignation. The flute player ceases his playing.* KUBLAI *looks down at her tenderly*]

KUBLAI

[*Musingly*]

Sing while you can. When the voice fails, listen to song. When the heart fails, be sung asleep.

[*Chidingly*]

That is a sad poem, Little Flower. Are you sad because you must soon become Queen of Persia? But Arghun is a great hero, a Khan of the blood of Chinghiz. You will be blessed with strong sons able to dare the proud destiny of our blood.

KUKACHIN

[*Dully*]

Your will is my law.

KUBLAI

Not my will. The will of life to continue the strong.

[*Forcing a consoling tone*]

Come, Little Flower. You have been fading here. See how pale you have grown! Your eyes are listless! Your lips droop even in smiling! But life at the Court of Persia is gay. There will be feasts, celebrations, diverting pleasures. You will be their Queen of Beauty.

KUKACHIN

[*With a sigh*]

A Queen may be only a woman who is unhappy.

KUBLAI

[*Teasingly*]

What despair! You talk like the ladies in poems who have lost their lovers!

[KUKACHIN *gives a violent start which he does not notice and a spasm of pain comes over her face*]

But, never mind, Arghun of Persia is a hero no woman could fail to love.

KUKACHIN

[*Starting to her feet—desperately*]

No! I can bear his children, but you cannot force me to—

[*She breaks down, weeping*]

KUBLAI

[*Astonished—gazing at her searchingly*]

Have I ever forced you to anything?

[*Then resuming his tone of tender teasing*]

I would say, rather, that ever since you were old enough to talk, the Ruler of Earth, as they innocently call your grandfather, has been little better than your slave.

KUKACHIN

[*Taking his hand and kissing it*]

Forgive me.

[*Then smiling at him*]

Have I been so bad as that? Has my love for you, who have been both father and mother to me, brought you no happiness?

KUBLAI

[*With deep emotion*]

You have been a golden bird singing beside a black river. You took your mother's place in my heart when she died. I was younger then. The river was not so black—the river of

man's life so deep and silent—flowing with an insane obsession —whither?—and why?

[*Then suddenly forcing a smile*]

Your poem has made me melancholy. And I am too old, if not too wise, to afford anything but optimism!

[*Then sadly*]

But now you in your turn must leave me, the river seems black indeed!

[*Then after a pause—tenderly*]

If it will make you unhappy, you need not marry Arghun Khan.

KUKACHIN

[*Recovering herself—resolutely*]

No. Your refusal would insult him. It might mean war.

[*Resignedly*]

And Arghun is as acceptable as any other. Forgive my weakness. You once told me a Princess must never weep.

[*She forces a smile*]

It makes no difference whether I stay or go, except that I shall be homesick for you.

[*She kisses his hand again*]

KUBLAI

[*Gratefully*]

My little one.

[*He strokes her hair. After a pause during which he looks at her thoughtfully—tenderly*]

We have never had secrets from each other, you and I. Tell me, can you have fallen in love?

KUKACHIN

[*After a pause—tremblingly*]

You must not ask that—if you respect my pride!

[*With a pitiful smile*]

You see—he does not even know—

[*She is blushing and hanging her head with confusion.* CHU-YIN *enters hurriedly from the right. He is very old but still upright. He is a bit breathless from haste but his face is wreathed in smiles*]

CHU-YIN

[*Making an obeisance*]

Your Majesty, do you hear that martial music? His Honor, Marco Polo, Mayor of Yang-Chau, seems about to visit you in state!

[*The strains of a distant band can be heard*]

KUBLAI

[*Still looking at* KUKACHIN *who has started violently at the mention of* MARCO'S *name—worriedly*]

Impossible! In love? . . .

[*Then to* CHU-YIN—*preoccupiedly*]

Eh? Marco? I have given no orders for him to return.

CHU-YIN

[*Ironically*]

No doubt he comes to refresh your humor with new copious notes on his exploits. Our Marco has made an active mayor. Yang-Chau, according to the petition for mercy you have received from its inhabitants, is the most governed of all your cities. I talked recently with a poet who had fled from there in horror. Yang-Chau used to have a soul, he said. Now it has a brand new Court House. And another, a man of wide culture, told me, our Christian mayor is exterminating our pleasures and our rats as if they were twin breeds of vermin!

KUBLAI

[*Irritably*]

He is beginning to weary me with his grotesque antics. A jester inspires mirth only so long as his deformity does not revolt one. Marco's spiritual hump begins to disgust me. He has not even a mortal soul, he has only an acquisitive instinct. We have given him every opportunity to learn. He has memorized everything and learned nothing. He has looked at everything and seen nothing. He has lusted for everything and loved nothing. He is only a shrewd and crafty greed. I shall send him home to his native wallow.

CHU-YIN

[*In mock alarm*]

What? Must we lose our clown?

KUKACHIN

[*Who has been listening with growing indignation*]

How dare you call him a clown? Just because he is not a dull philosopher you think—

KUBLAI

[*Astounded—admonishingly*]

Princess!

KUKACHIN

[*Turns to him—on the verge of tears—rebelliously*]

Why are you both so unjust? Has he not done well everything he was ever appointed to do? Has he not always succeeded where others failed? Has he not by his will-power and determination risen to the highest rank in your service?

[*Then her anger dying—more falteringly*]

He is strange, perhaps, to people who do not understand him,

but that is because he is so different from other men, so much stronger! And he has a soul! I know he has!

KUBLAI

[*Whose eyes have been searching her face—aghast*]
Kukachin!

[*She sees he has guessed her secret and at first she quails and shrinks away, then stiffens regally and returns his gaze unflinchingly.* CHU-YIN *looks from one to the other comprehendingly. Finally* KUBLAI *addresses her sternly*]

So, because I have allowed this fool a jester's latitude, because I permitted him to amuse you when you were a little girl, and since then, on his returns, to speak with you—a Princess!—

[*Then brusquely*]

I shall inform the ambassadors you will be ready to sail for Persia within ten days. You may retire.

[*She bows with a proud humility and walks off Left.* KUBLAI *sits in a somber study, frowning and biting his lips. The blaring of* MARCO'S *band grows steadily nearer*]

CHU-YIN

[*Gently*]

Is intolerance wisdom?

[*A pause. Then he goes on*]

I have suspected her love for him for a long time.

KUBLAI

Why didn't you warn me?

CHU-YIN

Love is to wisdom what wisdom seems to love—a folly. I reasoned, love comes like the breath of wind on water and is

gone leaving calm and reflection. I reasoned, but this is an enchanted moment for her and it will remain a poignant memory to recompense her when she is no longer a girl but merely a Queen. And I reasoned, who knows but some day this Marco may see into her eyes and his soul may be born and that will make a very interesting study—for Kukachin, and her grandfather, the Son of Heaven and Ruler of the World!

[*He bows mockingly*]

And for the old fool who is I!

KUBLAI

[*Bewilderedly*]

I cannot believe it! Why, since she was a little girl, she has only talked to him once or twice every two years or so!

CHU-YIN

That was unwise, for thus he has remained a strange, mysterious dream-knight from the exotic West, an enigma with something about him of a likable boy who brought her home each time a humble, foolish, touching little gift! And also remember that on each occasion he returned in triumph, having accomplished a task—a victor, more or less, acting the hero.

[*The band has crashed and dinned its way into the courtyard*]

As now! Listen!

[*He goes to the window and looks down—with ironical but intense amusement*]

Ah! He wears over his Mayor's uniform, the regalia of Cock of Paradise in his secret fraternal order of the Mystic Knights of Confucius! The band of the Xanadu lodge is with him as well as his own! He is riding on a very fat white horse. He dismounts, aided by the steps of your Imperial Palace! He

slaps a policeman on the back and asks his name! He chucks a baby under the chin and asks the mother its name. She lies and says "Marco" although the baby is a girl. He smiles. He is talking loudly so everyone can overhear. He gives the baby one yen to start a savings account and encourage its thrift. The mother looks savagely disappointed. The crowd cheers. He keeps his smile frozen as he notices an artist sketching him. He shakes hands with a one-legged veteran of the Manzi campaign and asks his name. The veteran is touched. Tears come to his eyes. He tells him—but the Polo forgets his name even as he turns to address the crowd. He waves one hand for silence. The band stops. It is the hand on which he wears five large jade rings. The other hand rests upon—and pats—the head of a bronze dragon, our ancient symbol of Yang, the celestial, male principle of the Cosmos. He clears his throat, the crowd stands petrified, he is about to draw a deep breath and open his mouth carefully in position one of the five phonetic exercises—

[*Here* CHU-YIN *chuckles*]

But I am an old man full of malice and venom and it embitters me to see others unreasonably happy so—

[*Here just as* MARCO *is heard starting to speak, he throws open the window and calls in a loud, commanding tone*]

Messer Polo, His Imperial Majesty commands that you stop talking, dismiss your followers, and repair to his presence at once!

MARCO'S VOICE

[*Very faint and crestfallen*]

Oh—all right—I'll be right there.

KUBLAI

[*Cannot control a laugh in spite of himself—helplessly*]

How can one deal seriously with such a child-actor?

CHU-YIN

[*Coming back from the window—ironically*]

Most women, including Kukachin, love children—and all women must take acting seriously in order to love at all.

[*Just as he finishes speaking,* KUKACHIN *enters from the left. She is terribly alarmed. She throws herself at* KUBLAI'S *feet*]

KUKACHIN

Why did you summon him? I told you he does not know. It is all my fault! Punish me, if you will! But promise me you will not harm him!

KUBLAI

[*Looking down at her—sadly*]

Is it my custom to take vengeance?

[*Then as people are heard approaching—quickly*]

Compose yourself! Remember again, Princesses may not weep!

[*She springs to her feet, turns away for a moment, then turns back, her face rigidly calm and emotionless.* KUBLAI *nods with appreciation of her control*]

Good. You will make a Queen.

[*She bows and retires backward to the left side of the throne. At the same moment,* NICOLO *and* MAFFEO POLO *enter ceremoniously from the right. They wear the regalia of officers in the Mystic Knights of Confucius over their rich merchants' robes. (This costume is a queer jumble of stunning effects that recall the parade uniforms of our modern Knights Templar, of Columbus,*

of Pythias, Mystic Shriners, the Klan, etc.) They are absurdly conscious and proud of this get-up—like two old men in a children's play. KUBLAI *and* CHU-YIN *regard them with amused astonishment. Even* KUKACHIN *cannot restrain a smile. They prostrate themselves at the foot of the throne. Then just at the right moment, preceded by a conscious cough,* MARCO POLO *makes his entrance. Over his gorgeous uniform of Mayor, he wears his childishly fantastic regalia as chief of the Mystic Knights of Confucius. As he steps on, he takes off his gilded, laced hat with its Bird of Paradise plumes and bows with a mechanical dignity on all sides. He has the manner and appearance of a successful movie star at a masquerade ball, disguised so that no one can fail to recognize him. His regular, good-looking, well-groomed face is carefully arranged into the grave responsible expression of a Senator from the South of the United States of America about to propose an amendment to the Constitution restricting the migration of non-Nordic birds into Texas, or prohibiting the practice of the laws of biology within the twelve-mile limit. He moves in stately fashion to the throne and prostrates himself before the* KAAN. KUKACHIN *stares at him with boundless admiration, hoping to catch his eye. The* KAAN *looks from her to him and his face grows stern.* CHU-YIN *is enjoying himself*]

KUBLAI

Rise.

[MARCO *does so.* KUBLAI *continues dryly*]

To what do I owe the honor of this unexpected visit?

MARCO

[*Hastily, but with full confidence*]

Well, I was sending in to your treasury the taxes of Yang-Chau for the fiscal year, and I knew you'd be so astonished at the unprecedented amount I had sweated out of them that you'd want to know how I did it—so here I am.

[*An awkward pause.* MARCO *is disconcerted at the* KAAN'S *steady impersonal stare. He glances about—sees the* PRINCESS—*welcomes this opportunity for diverting attention. Bowing with humble respect*]

Pardon me, Princess. I didn't recognize you before, you've gotten so grown up.

[*Flatteringly*]

You look like a Queen.

KUKACHIN

[*Falteringly*]

I bid you welcome, Your Honor.

KUBLAI

[*As a warning to* KUKACHIN *to control her emotion*]

The Princess will soon be Queen of Persia.

MARCO

[*Flustered and awed, bowing to her again—flatteringly*]

Then—Your Majesty—if I may be humbly permitted

[*Bowing to* KUBLAI]

—to offer my congratulations—and before I settle down to discussing business—if her Highness—Majesty—will accept a small token of my esteem—

[*Here he stamps his foot. An* AFRICAN SLAVE, *dressed in a pink livery with green hat and shoes and stockings and carrying a golden wicker basket, enters. He kneels,*

presents the basket to MARCO, *who lifts the cover and pulls out a small chow puppy with a pink ribbon tied around its neck. He steps forward and offers this to the* PRINCESS, *with a boyish grin*]

A contribution to your zoo—from your most humble servant!

KUKACHIN

[*Taking it—flushing with pleasure*]

Oh, what a little darling!

[*She cuddles the puppy in her arms*]

MARCO

[*Boastfully*]

He's a genuine, pedigreed pup. I procured him at great cost—I mean he's extra well-bred.

KUKACHIN

Oh, thank you so much, Marco Polo!

[*Stammering*]

I mean, Your Honor.

KUBLAI

[*Warningly*]

His Honor wishes to talk business, Princess.

KUKACHIN

[*Controlling herself*]

I ask pardon.

[*She bows and retires to left, rear, where she stands fondling the puppy and watching* MARCO]

MARCO

[*Plunging in confidently on what he thinks is a sure point of attack*]

My tax scheme, Your Majesty, that got such wonderful results is simplicity itself. I simply reversed the old system. For

one thing I found they had a high tax on excess profits. Imagine a profit being excess! Why, it isn't humanly possible! I repealed it. And I repealed the tax on luxuries. I found out the great majority in Yang-Chau couldn't afford luxuries. The tax wasn't democratic enough to make it pay! I crossed it off and I wrote on the statute books a law that taxes every necessity in life, a law that hits every man's pocket equally, be he beggar or banker! And I got results!

CHU-YIN

[*Gravely*]

In beggars?

KUBLAI

[*With a chilling air*]

I have received a petition from the inhabitants of Yang-Chau enumerating over three thousand cases of your gross abuse of power!

MARCO

[*Abashed only for a moment*]

Oh, so they've sent that vile slander to you, have they? That's the work of a mere handful of radicals—

KUBLAI

[*Dryly*]

Five hundred thousand names are signed to it.

[*Still more dryly*]

Half a million citizens accuse you of endeavoring to stamp out their ancient culture!

MARCO

What! Why, I even had a law passed that anyone caught interfering with culture would be subject to a fine! It was Section One of a blanket statute that every citizen must be happy

or go to jail. I found it was the unhappy ones who were always making trouble and getting discontented. You see, here's the way I figure it; if a man's good, he's happy—and if he isn't happy, it's a sure sign he's no good to himself or anyone else and he better be put where he can't do harm.

KUBLAI

[*A bit helplessly now*]

They complain that you have entirely prohibited all free expression of opinion.

MARCO

[*Feelingly*]

Well, when they go to the extreme of circulating such treasonable opinions against me, isn't it time to protect your sovereignty by strong measures?

[KUBLAI *stares at this effrontery with amazement.* MARCO *watches this impression and hurries on with an injured dignity*]

I can't believe, Your Majesty, that this minority of malcontents can have alienated your long-standing high regard for me!

KUBLAI

[*Conquered—suddenly overpowered by a great smile*]

Not so! You are the marvel of mankind! And I would be lost without you!

MARCO

[*Flattered but at the same time nonplussed*]

I thank you!

[*Hesitatingly*]

But, to tell the truth, I want to resign, anyhow. I've done all I could. I've appointed five hundred committees to carry on

my work and I retire confident that with the system I've instituted everything will go on automatically and brains are no longer needed.

[*He adds as a bitter afterthought*]

And it's lucky they're not or Yang-Chau would soon be a ruin!

KUBLAI

[*With mock seriousness*]

In behalf of the population of Yang-Chau I accept your resignation, with deep regret for the loss of your unique and extraordinary services.

[*Then suddenly in a strange voice*]

Do you still possess your immortal soul, Marco Polo?

MARCO

[*Flustered*]

Ha-ha! Yes, of course—at least I hope so. But I see the joke. You mean that Yang-Chau used to be a good place to lose one. Well, you wouldn't know the old town now. Sin is practically unseen.

[*Hurrying on to another subject—boisterously*]

But however much I may have accomplished there, it's nothing to the big surprise I've got in reserve for you. May I demonstrate?

[*Without waiting for permission, takes a piece of printed paper like a dollar bill from his pocket*]

What is it? Paper. Correct! What is it worth? Nothing. That's where you're mistaken. It's worth ten yen. No, I'm not a liar! See ten yen written on it, don't you? Well, I'll tell you the secret. This is money, legally valued at ten yens' worth of anything you wish to buy, by order of His Imperial Majesty, the Great Kaan! Do you see my point? Its advan-

tages over gold and silver coin are obvious. It's light, easy to carry,—

[*Here he gives a prodigious wink*]

wears out quickly, can be made at very slight expense and yields enormous profit. Think of getting ten yen for this piece of paper. Yet it can be done. If you make the people believe it's worth it, it is! After all, when you stop to think, who was it first told them gold was money? I'll bet anything it was some quick-thinker who'd just discovered a gold mine!

[KUBLAI *and* CHU-YIN *stare at him in petrified incredulity. He mistakes it for admiration and is flattered. Bows and lays his paper money on the* KAAN'S *knee*]

You're stunned, I can see that. It's so simple—and yet, who ever thought of it before me? I was amazed myself. Think it over, Your Majesty, and let the endless possibilities dawn on you! And now I want to show another little aid to government that I thought out.

[*He makes a sign to his uncle and father. The former takes a mechanical contrivance out of a box and sets it up on the floor. It is a working model of a clumsy cannon.* NICOLO, *meanwhile, takes children's blocks out of his box and builds them into a fortress wall.* MARCO *is talking. His manner and voice have become grave and portentous*]

It all came to me, like an inspiration, last Easter Sunday when Father and Uncle and I were holding a little service. Uncle read a prayer which spoke of Our Lord as the Prince of Peace. Somehow, that took hold of me. I thought to myself, well, it's funny, there always have been wars and there always will be, I suppose, because I've never read much in any history

about heroes who waged peace. Still, that's wrong. War is a waste of money which eats into the profits of life like thunder! Then why war, I asked myself? But how are you going to end it? Then the flash came! There's only one workable way and that's to conquer everybody else in the world so they'll never dare fight you again! An impossible task, you object? Not any more! This invention you see before you makes conquering easy. Let me demonstrate with these models. On our right, you see the fortress wall of a hostile capital. Under your present system with battering rams, to make an effective breach in this wall would cost you the lives of ten thousand men. Valuing each life conservatively at ten yen, this amounts to one hundred thousand yen! This makes the cost of breaching prohibitive. But all of this waste can be saved. How? Just keep your eyes on your right and permit my exclusive invention to solve this problem.

[*He addresses the fortress in a matter-of-fact tone*]

So you won't surrender, eh?

[*Then in a mock-heroic falsetto, answering himself like a ventriloquist*]

We die but we never surrender!

[*Then matter-of-factly*]

Well, Brother, those heroic sentiments do you a lot of credit, but this is war and not a tragedy. You're up against new methods this time, and you better give in and avoid wasteful bloodshed.

[*Answering himself*]

No! Victory or Death!

[*Then again*]

All right, Brother, don't blame me. Fire!

[*His uncle fires the gun. There is a bang, and a leaden ball is shot out which knocks a big breach in the wall of blocks.* MARCO *beams.* KUKACHIN *gives a scream of fright, then a gasp of delight, and claps her hands.* MARCO *bows to her the more gratefully as* KUBLAI *and* CHU-YIN *are staring at him with a queer appalled wonder that puzzles him although he cannot imagine it is not admiration*]

I see you are stunned again. What made it do that, you're wondering? This!

[*He takes a little package out of his pocket and pours some black powder out of it on his palm*]

It's the same powder they've been using here in children's fire works. They've had it under their noses for years without a single soul ever having creative imagination enough to visualize the enormous possibilities. But you can bet I did! It was a lad crying with a finger half blown off where he held a fire-cracker too long that first opened my eyes. I learned the formula, improved on it, experimented in secret, and here's the gratifying result!

[*He takes the cannon ball from his father who has retrieved it*]

You see? Now just picture this little ball magnified into one weighing twenty pounds or so and then you'll really grasp my idea. The destruction of property and loss of life would be tremendous! No one could resist you!

KUBLAI

[*After a pause—musingly*]

I am interested in the hero of that city who preferred death to defeat. Did you conquer his immortal soul?

MARCO

[*With frankness*]

Well, you can't consider souls when you're dealing with soldiers, can you?

[*He takes his model and places it on the* KAAN'S *knee with the paper money*]

When you have time, I wish you'd look this over. In fact—and this is the big idea I've been saving for the last—consider these two inventions of mine in combination. You conquer the world with this—

[*He pats the cannon-model*]

and you pay for it with this.

[*He pats the paper money—rhetorically*]

You become the bringer of peace on earth and good-will to men, and it doesn't cost you a yen hardly. Your initial expense —my price—is as low as I can possibly make it out of my deep affection for your Majesty—only a million yen.

KUBLAI

[*Quickly*]

In paper?

MARCO

[*With a grin and a wink*]

No. I'd prefer gold, if you don't mind.

[*Silence.* MARCO *goes on meaningly*]

Of course, I don't want to force them on you. I'm confident there's a ready market for them elsewhere.

KUBLAI

[*Grimly smiling*]

Oh, I quite realize that in self-protection I've got to buy them—or kill you!

MARCO

[*Briskly*]

Then it's a bargain? But I've still got one proviso—that you give us permission to go home.

[KUKACHIN *gives a little gasp.* MARCO *goes on feelingly*] We're homesick, Your Majesty. We've served you faithfully, and frankly now that we've made our fortune we want to go home and enjoy it. There's no place like home, Your Majesty! I'm sure even a King in his palace appreciates that.

KUBLAI

[*With smiling mockery*]

But—who can play your part? And your mission—your example? What will your Pope say when you tell him I'm still unconverted?

MARCO

[*Confidently*]

Oh, you will be—on your death-bed, if not before—a man of your common sense.

KUBLAI

[*Ironically*]

Courtier!

[*Then solemnly*]

But my last objection is insurmountable. You haven't yet proved you have an immortal soul!

MARCO

It doesn't need proving.

KUBLAI

If you could only bring forward one reliable witness.

MARCO

My Father and Uncle can swear—

KUBLAI

They think it is a family trait. Their evidence is prejudiced.

MARCO

[*Worried now—looks at* CHU-YIN *hopefully*]

Mr. Chu-Yin ought to be wise enough to acknowledge—

CHU-YIN

[*Smiling*]

But I believe that what can be proven cannot be true.

[MARCO *stands puzzled, irritated, looking stubborn, frightened and foolish. His eyes wander about the room, finally resting appealingly on* KUKACHIN]

KUKACHIN

[*Suddenly steps forward—flushed but proudly*]

I will bear witness he has a soul.

[KUBLAI *looks at her with a sad wonderment,* CHU-YIN *smilingly,* MARCO *with gratitude,* NICOLO *and* MAFFEO *exchange a glance of congratulation*]

KUBLAI

How can you know, Princess?

KUKACHIN

Because I have seen it—once, when he bound up my dog's leg, once when he played with a slave's baby, once when he listened to music over water and I heard him sigh, once when he looked at sunrise, another time at sunset, another at the stars, another at the moon, and each time he said that Nature was wonderful. And all the while, whenever he has been with me I have always felt—something strange and different—and that something must be His Honor's soul, must it not?

KUBLAI

[*With wondering bitterness*]

The eye sees only its own sight. THE MIND HAS WIDER VISIO

CHU-YIN

But a woman may feel life in the unborn.

KUBLAI

[*Mockingly but sadly*]

I cannot contest the profound intuitions of virgins and mystics. Go home, Your Honor, Immortal Marco, and live forever!

[*With forced gaiety*]

And tell your Pope your example has done much to convert me to wisdom—if I could find the true one!

KUKACHIN

[*Boldly now*]

And may I humbly request, since His Honor, and his father and uncle, are experienced masters of navigation, that they be appointed, for my greater safety, to attend me and command the fleet on my voyage to Persia?

KUBLAI

[*Astonished at her boldness—rebukingly*]

Princess!

KUKACHIN

[*Returning his look—simply*]

It is the last favor I shall ever ask. I wish to be converted to wisdom, too—one or another—before I become a name.

KUBLAI

[*Bitterly*]

I cannot deny your last request, even though you wish your own unhappiness.

[*To the* Polos]

You will accompany the Princess.

MARCO

[*Jubilantly*]

I'll be only too glad!

[*Turning to the* PRINCESS]

It'll be a great pleasure!

[*Then briskly*]

And have we your permission to trade in the ports along the way?

KUKACHIN

[*To* MARCO, *embarrassedly*]

As you please, Your Honor.

MARCO

[*Bowing low*]

I'll promise it won't disturb you. It's really a scheme to while away the hours, for I warn you in advance this is liable to be a mighty long trip.

KUKACHIN

[*Impulsively*]

I do not care how long—

[*She stops in confusion*]

MARCO

Now if I had the kind of ships we build in Venice to work with I could promise you a record passage, but with your tubby junks it's just as well to expect the worst and you'll never be disappointed.

[*Familiarly*]

And the trouble with any ship, for a man of action, is that there's so little you can do. I hate idleness where there's nothing to occupy your mind but thinking. I've been so used to being out, overcoming obstacles, getting things done, creating

results where there weren't any before, going after the impossible—well—

[*Here he gives a little deprecating laugh*]

all play and no work makes Jack a dull boy. I'm sure I'd make a pretty dull person to have around if there wasn't plenty to do. You might not believe it, but when I'm idle I actually get gloomy sometimes!

KUKACHIN

[*Eagerly*]

But we shall have dancers on the ship and actors who will entertain us with plays—

MARCO

[*Heartily*]

That'll be grand. There's nothing better than to sit down in a good seat at a good play after a good day's work in which you know you've accomplished something, and after you've had a good dinner, and just take it easy and enjoy a good wholesome thrill or a good laugh and get your mind off serious things until it's time to go to bed.

KUKACHIN

[*Vaguely*]

Yes.

[*Then eager to have him pleased*]

And there will be poets to recite their poems—

MARCO

[*Not exactly overjoyed*]

That'll be nice.

[*Then very confidentially—in a humorous whisper*]

I'll tell you a good joke on me, Your Highness. I once wrote a poem myself; would you ever believe it to look at me?

KUKACHIN

[*Smiling at him as at a boy—teasingly*]

No?

MARCO

[*Smiling back like a boy*]

Yes, I did too, when I was young and foolish. It wasn't bad stuff either, considering I'd had no practice.

[*Frowning with concentration*]

Wait! Let me see if I can remember any—oh, yes—"You are lovely as the gold in the sun."

[*He hesitates*]

KUKACHIN

[*Thrilled*]

That is beautiful!

MARCO

That's only the first line.

[*Then jokingly*]

You can consider yourself lucky. I don't remember the rest.

KUKACHIN

[*Dropping her eyes—softly*]

Perhaps on the voyage you may be inspired to write another.

KUBLAI

[*Who has been staring at them with weary amazement*]

Life is so stupid, it is mysterious!

DARKNESS

ACT TWO

Scene Two

Scene: *The wharves of the Imperial Fleet at the seaport of Zayton—several weeks later. At the left, stern to, is an enormous junk, the flagship. The wharf extends out, rear, to the right of her. At the right is a warehouse, from a door in which a line of half-naked slaves, their necks, waists, and right ankles linked up by chains, form an endless chain which revolves mechanically, as it were, on sprocket wheels in the interiors of the shed and the junk. As each individual link passes out of the shed it carries a bale on its head, moves with mechanical precision across the wharf, disappears into the junk, and reappears a moment later having dumped its load and moves back into the shed. The whole process is a man-power original of the modern devices with bucket scoops that dredge, load coal, sand, etc. By the side of the shed, a foreman sits with a drum and gong with which he marks a perfect time for the slaves, a four beat rhythm, three beats of the drum, the fourth a bang on the gong as one slave at each end loads and unloads. The effect is like the noise of a machine.*

A bamboo stair leads up to the high poop of the junk from front, left. It is just getting dawn. A forest of masts, spars, sails of woven bamboo laths, shuts out all view of the harbor at the end of the wharf. At the foot of the stairs, Chu-Yin *stands like a sentinel. Above on top of the poop, the figures of* Kublai *and* Kukachin *are outlined against the lightening sky.*

KUBLAI

[*Brokenly*]

I must go.

[*He takes her in his arms*]

We have said all we can say. Little Daughter, all rare things are secrets which cannot be revealed to anyone. That is why life must be so lonely. But I love you more dearly than anything on earth. And I know you love me. So perhaps we do not need to understand.

[*Rebelliously*]

Yet I wish some Power could give me assurance that in granting your desire I am acting for your happiness, and for your eventual deliverance from sorrow to acceptance and peace.

[*He notices she is weeping—in self-reproach*]

Old fool! I have made you weep again! I am death advising life how to live! Be deaf to me! Strive after what your heart desires! Who can ever know which are the mistakes we make? One should be either sad or joyful. Contentment is a warm sty for the eaters and sleepers!

[*Impulsively*]

Do not weep! Even now I can refuse your hand to Arghun. Let it mean war!

KUKACHIN

[*Looking up and controlling herself—with a sad finality*]

You do not understand. I wish to take this voyage.

KUBLAI

[*Desperately*]

But I could keep Polo here.

[*With impotent anger*]

He shall pray for his soul on his knees before you!

KUKACHIN

[*With calm sadness*]

Do I want a slave?

[*Dreamily*]

I desire a captain of my ship on a long voyage in dangerous, enchanted seas.

KUBLAI

[*With a fierce defiance of fate*]

I am the Great Kaan! I shall have him killed!

[*A pause*]

CHU-YIN

[*From below, recites in a calm, soothing tone*]

The noble man ignores self. The wise man ignores action. His truth acts without deeds. His knowledge venerates the unknowable. To him birth is not the beginning nor is death the end.

[KUBLAI'S *head bends in submission.* CHU-YIN *continues tenderly*]

I feel there are tears in your eyes. The Great Kaan, Ruler of the World, may not weep.

KUBLAI

[*Brokenly*]

Ruler? I am my slave!

[*Then controlling himself—forcing an amused teasing tone*]

Marco will soon be here, wearing the self-assurance of an immortal soul and his new admiral's uniform! I must fly in retreat from what I can neither laugh away nor kill. Write when you reach Persia. Tell me—all you can tell—particularly what his immortal soul is like!

[*Then tenderly*]

Farewell, Little Flower! Live. There is no other advice possible from one human being to another.

KUKACHIN

Live—and love!

KUBLAI

[*Trying to renew his joking tone*]

One's ancestors, particularly one's grandfather. Do not forget me!

KUKACHIN

Never!

[*They embrace*]

KUBLAI

[*Chokingly*]

Farewell.

[*He hurries down the ladder—to* CHU-YIN]

You remain—see him—bring me word—

[*He turns his head up to* KUKACHIN]

For the last time, farewell, Little Flower of my life! May you know happiness!

[*He turns quickly and goes*]

KUKACHIN

Farewell!

[*She bows her head on the rail and weeps*]

CHU-YIN

[*After a pause*]

You are tired, Princess. Your eyes are red from weeping and your nose is red. You look old—a little homely, even. The Admiral Polo will not recognize you.

[KUKACHIN *dries her eyes hastily*]

KUKACHIN

[*Half-smiling and half-weeping at his teasing*]

I think you are a very horrid old man!

CHU-YIN

A little sleep, Princess, and you will be beautiful. The old dream passes. Sleep and awake in the new. Life is perhaps most wisely regarded as a bad dream between two awakenings, and every day is a life in miniature.

KUKACHIN

[*Wearily and drowsily*]

Your wisdom makes me sleep.

[*Her head sinks back on her arms and she is soon asleep*]

CHU-YIN

[*After a pause—softly*]

Kukachin!

[*He sees she is asleep—chuckles*]

I have won a convert.

[*Then speculatively*]

Youth needs so much sleep and old age so little. Is that not a proof that from birth to death one grows steadily closer to complete life? Hum.

[*He ponders on this. From the distance comes the sound of* POLO'S *band playing the same martial air as in the previous scene.* CHU-YIN *starts—then smiles. The music quickly grows louder. The* PRINCESS *awakes with a start*]

KUKACHIN

[*Startledly*]

Chu-Yin! Is that the Admiral coming?

CHU-YIN

[*Dryly*]

I suspect so. It is like him not to neglect a person in the city when saying good-bye.

KUKACHIN

[*Flurriedly*]

I must go to my cabin for a moment.

[*She hurries back*]

CHU-YIN

[*Listens with a pleased, ironical smile as the band gets rapidly nearer. Finally it seems to turn a corner nearby, and a moment later, to a deafening clangor,* MARCO *enters, dressed in a gorgeous Admiral's uniform. Two paces behind, side by side, walk* MAFFEO *and* NICOLO, *dressed only a trifle less gorgeously as Commodores. Behind them comes the band.* MARCO *halts as he sees* CHU-YIN, *salutes condescendingly, and signals the band to be silent.* CHU-YIN *bows gravely and remarks as if answering an argument in his own mind*]

Still, even though they cannot be house-broken, I prefer monkeys because they are so much less noisy.

MARCO

[*With a condescending grin*]

What's that—more philosophy?

[*Clapping him on the back*]

Well, I like your determination.

[*He wipes his brow with a handkerchief*]

Phew! I'll certainly be glad to get back home where I can hear some music that I can keep step to. My feet just won't give in to your tunes.

[*With a grin*]

And look at the Old Man and Uncle. They're knock-kneed for life.

[*Confidentially*]

Still, I thought the band was a good idea—to sort of cheer up the Princess, and let people know she's leaving at the same time.

[*As people begin to come in and stare at the poop of the ship*]

See the crowd gather? I got them out of bed, too!

CHU-YIN

[*Ironically*]

You also woke up the Princess. You sail at sunrise?

MARCO

[*Briskly—taking operations in hand*]

Thank you for reminding me. I've got to hurry.

[*To his* FATHER *and* UNCLE]

You two better get aboard your ships and be ready to cast off when I signal.

[*They go off. He suddenly bawls to someone in the ship*]

Much more cargo to load?

A VOICE

Less than a hundred bales, sir.

MARCO

Good. Call all hands on deck and stand by to put sail on her.

A VOICE

Aye-aye, sir.

MARCO

And look lively, damn your lazy souls!

[*To* CHU-YIN—*complacently*]

You've got to impose rigid discipline on shipboard.

CHU-YIN

[*Inquisitively*]

I suppose you feel your heavy responsibility as escort to the future Queen of Persia?

MARCO

[*Soberly*]

Yes, I do. I'll confess I do. If she were a million yen's worth of silk or spices, I wouldn't worry an instant, but a Queen, that's a different matter. However, when you give my last word to His Majesty, you can tell him that I've always done my duty by him and I won't fail him this time. As long as I've a breath in me, I'll take care of her!

CHU-YIN

[*With genuine appreciation*]

That is bravely spoken.

MARCO

I don't know anything about brave speaking. I'm by nature a silent man, and I let my actions do the talking. But, as I've proved to you people in Cathay time and again, when I say I'll do a thing, I do it!

CHU-YIN

[*Suddenly with a sly smile to himself*]

I was forgetting. His Majesty gave me some secret last instructions for you. You are, at some time every day of the voyage, to look carefully and deeply into the Princess's eyes and note what you see there.

MARCO

What for?

[*Then brightly*]

Oh, he's afraid she'll get fever in the tropics. Well, you tell him I'll see to it she keeps in good condition. I'll do what's right by her without considering fear or favor.

[*Then practically*]

Then, of course, if her husband thinks at the end of the voyage that my work deserves a bonus—why, that's up to him.

[*Inquisitively*]

She's never seen him, has she?

CHU-YIN

No.

MARCO

[*With an air of an independent thinker*]

Well, I believe in love matches myself, even for Kings and Queens.

[*With a grin*]

Come to think of it, I'll be getting married to Donata myself when I get home.

CHU-YIN

Donata?

MARCO

[*Proudly*]

The best little girl in the world! She's there waiting for me.

CHU-YIN

You have heard from her?

MARCO

I don't need to hear. I can trust her. And I've been true to her, too. I haven't ever thought of loving anyone else. Of

course, I don't mean I've been any he-virgin. I've played with concubines at odd moments when my mind needed relaxation—but that's only human nature.

[*His eyes glistening reminiscently*]

Some of them were beauties, too!

[*With a sigh*]

Well, I've had my fun and I suppose it's about time I settled down.

CHU-YIN

Poor Princess!

MARCO

What's that? Oh, I see, yes, I sympathize with her, too—going into a harem. If there's one thing more than another that proves you in the East aren't responsible, it's that harem notion.

[*With a grin*]

Now in the West we've learned by experience that one at a time is trouble enough.

CHU-YIN

[*Dryly*]

Be sure and converse on love and marriage often with the Princess. I am certain you will cure her.

MARCO

[*Mystified*]

Cure her?

CHU-YIN

Cure her mind of any unreasonable imaginings.

MARCO

[*Easily*]

Oh, I'll guarantee she'll be contented, if that's what you mean.

[*The human chain in back finishes its labors and disappears into the shed. The crowd of people has been steadily augmented by new arrivals, until a small multitude is gathered standing in silence staring up at the poop.* MARCO *says with satisfaction*]

Well, cargo's all aboard, before schedule, too. We killed six slaves but, by God, we did it! And look at the crowd we've drawn, thanks to my band!

CHU-YIN

[*Disgustedly*]

They would have come without noise. They love their Princess.

MARCO

[*Cynically*]

Maybe, but they love their sleep, too. I know 'em!

[*A cry of adoration goes up from the crowd. With one movement they prostrate themselves as the* PRINCESS *comes from the cabin dressed in a robe of silver and stands at the rail looking down*]

THE CROWD

[*In a long, ululating whisper*]

Farewell—farewell—farewell—farewell!

KUKACHIN

[*Silences them with a motion of her hand*]

I shall know the long sorrow of an exile
As I sail over the green water and the blue water
Alone under a strange sky amid alien flowers and faces.
My eyes shall be ever red with weeping, my heart bleeding,
While I long for the land of my birth and my childhood
Remembering with love the love of my people.

[*A sound of low weeping comes from the crowd*]

Farewell!

THE CROWD

Farewell—farewell—farewell—farewell!

MARCO

[*Feeling foolish because he is moved*]

Damn it! Reciting always makes me want to cry about something. Poetry acts worse on me than wine that way.

[*He calls up—very respectfully*]

Princess! We'll be sailing at once. Would you mind retiring to your cabin? I'm afraid you're going to catch cold standing bareheaded in the night air.

KUKACHIN

[*Tremulously—grateful for his solicitude*]

I am in your charge, Admiral. I am grateful that you should think of my health, and I obey.

[*She turns and goes back into her cabin. The crowd silently filters away, leaving only the band*]

MARCO

[*Proudly and fussily*]

You can't have women around when you're trying to get something done. I can see where I'll have to be telling her what to do every second. Well, I hope she'll take it in good part and not forget I'm acting in her husband's interests, not my own.

[*Very confidentially*]

You know, apart from her being a Princess, I've always respected her a lot. She's not haughty and she's—well, human, that's what I mean. I'd do anything I could for her, Princess or not! Yes, sir!

CHU-YIN

[*Wonderingly*]

There may be hope—after all.

MARCO

What's that?

CHU-YIN

Nothing. Enigma!

MARCO

There's always hope! Don't be a damned pessimist!

[*Clapping him on the back*]

Enigma, eh? Well, if that isn't like a philosopher—to start in on riddles just at the last moment!

[*He ascends half-way up the ladder to the poop, then turns back to* CHU-YIN *with a chuckle*]

Take a fool's advice and don't think so much or you'll get old before your time!

[*More oratorically*]

If you look before you leap, you'll decide to sit down. Keep on going ahead and you can't help being right! You're bound to get somewhere!

[*He suddenly breaks into a grin again*]

There! Don't ever say I never gave you good advice!

[*He springs swiftly to the top deck and bellows*]

Cast off there amidships! Where the hell are you—asleep? Set that foresail! Hop, you kidney-footed gang of thumb-fingered infidels!

[*He turns with a sudden fierceness on the band who are standing stolidly, awaiting orders*]

Hey you! Didn't I tell you to strike up when I set foot on the

deck? What do you think I paid you in advance for—to wave me good-bye?

[*The band plunges madly into it. A frenzied cataract of sound results.* CHU-YIN *covers his ears and moves away, shaking his head, as* MARCO *leans over the rail and bawls after him*]

And tell the Kaan—anything he wants—write me—just Venice—they all know me there—and if they don't, by God, they're going to!

DARKNESS

ACT TWO

Scene Three

Scene: *Poop deck of the royal junk of the* Princess Kukachin *at anchor in the harbor of Hormuz, Persia—a moonlight night some two years later. On a silver throne at center* Kukachin *is sitting dressed in a gorgeous golden robe of ceremony. Her beauty has grown more intense, her face has undergone a change, it is the face of a woman who has known real sorrow and suffering. In the shadow of the highest deck in rear her women-in-waiting are in a group, sitting on cushions. On the highest deck in rear* Sailors *lower and furl the sail of the mizzenmast, every movement being carried out in unison with a machine-like rhythm. The bulwarks of the junk are battered and splintered, the sail is frayed and full of jagged holes and patches. In the foreground (the port side of deck) the two elder* Polos *are squatting. Each has a bag of money before him from which they are carefully counting gold coins and packing stacks of these into a chest that stands between them.*

MARCO

[*His voice, hoarse and domineering, comes from the left just before the curtain rises*]

Let go that anchor!

[*A meek "Aye-aye, sir," is heard replying and then a great splash and a long rattling of chains. The curtain then rises discovering the scene as above.* Marco's *voice is again heard, "Lower that mizzensail! Look lively now!"*]

BOATSWAIN

[*With the sailors*]

Aye-aye, sir!

[*They lower the sail, and begin to tie it up trimly*]

MAFFEO

[*Looking up and straightening his cramped back—with a relieved sigh*]

Here's Persia! I'll be glad to get on dry land again. Two years on this foreign tub are too much.

NICOLO

[*With a grunt, intent on the money*]

Keep counting if you want to finish before we go ashore. It's nine hundred thousand now in our money, isn't it?

MAFFEO

[*Nods—counting again*]

This lot will bring it to a million.

[*He begins stacking and packing again*]

BOATSWAIN

[*Chanting as his men work*]

Great were the waves
Volcanoes of foam
Ridge after ridge
To the rim of the world!
Great were the waves!

CHORUS OF SAILORS

Great were the waves!

BOATSWAIN

Fierce were the winds!
Demons screamed!

Their claws rended
Sails into rags,
Fierce were the winds!

CHORUS

Fierce were the winds!

BOATSWAIN

Fire was the sun!
Boiled the blood black,
Our veins hummed
Like bronze kettles.
Fire was the sun!

CHORUS

Fire was the sun!

BOATSWAIN

Long was the voyage!
Life drifted becalmed,
A dead whale awash
In the toil of tides.
Long was the voyage!

CHORUS

Long was the voyage!

BOATSWAIN

Many have died!
Sleep in green water.
Wan faces at home
Pray to the sea.
Many have died!

CHORUS

Many have died!

KUKACHIN

[*Chants the last line after them—sadly*]

Many have died!

[*After a brooding pause she rises and chants in a low voice*]

If I were asleep in green water,
No pang could be added to my sorrow,
Old grief would be forgotten,
I would know peace

SAILORS

There is peace deep in the sea
But the surface is sorrow.

WOMEN

Kukachin will be a Queen!
A Queen may not sorrow
Save for her King!

KUKACHIN

When love is not loved it loves death.
When I sank drowning, I loved Death.
When the pirate's knife gleamed, I loved Death,
When fever burned me I loved Death.
But the man I love saved me.

SAILORS

Death lives in a silent sea,
Gray and cold under cold gray sky,
Where there is neither sun nor wind
Nor joy nor sorrow!

WOMEN

Kukachin will be a wife.

A wife must not sorrow
Save for her man.

KUKACHIN

A hero is merciful to women.
Why could not this man see or feel or know?
Then he would have let me die.

SAILORS

There are harbors at every voyage-end
Where we rest from the sorrows of the sea.

WOMEN

Kukachin will be a mother
A mother may not sorrow
Save for her son.

KUKACHIN

[*Bows her head in resignation. A pause of silence*]

[MARCO POLO *enters briskly from below on the left. He is dressed in full uniform, looking spick and span and self-conscious. His face wears an expression of humorous scorn. He bows ceremoniously to the* PRINCESS, *his attitude a queer mixture of familiarity and an uncertain awe*]

MARCO

Your Highness—

[*Then ingratiatingly*]

—or I suppose I'd better say Majesty now that we've reached Persia—I've got queer news for you. A boat just came from the shore with an official notification that your intended husband, Arghun Khan, is dead and I'm to hand you over to his son, Ghazan, to marry.

[*He hands her a sealed paper*]

See!

KUKACHIN

[*Letting the paper slip from her hand without a glance—dully*]

What does it matter?

MARCO

[*Admiringly—as he picks it up*]

I must say you take it coolly. Of course, come to think of it, never having seen either, one's as good as another.

[*He winds up philosophically*]

And you'll be Queen just the same, that's the main thing.

KUKACHIN

[*With bitter irony*]

So you think that is happiness?

[*Then as* MARCO *stares at her uncertainly, she turns away and looks out over the sea with a sigh—after a pause*]

There, where I see the lights, is that Hormuz?

MARCO

Yes. And I was forgetting, the messenger said Ghazan Khan would come to take you ashore tonight.

KUKACHIN

[*With sudden fear*]

So soon? Tonight?

[*Then rebelliously*]

Is the granddaughter of the Great Kublai no better than a slave? I will not go until it pleases me!

MARCO

Good for you! That's the spirit!

[*Then alarmed at his own temerity—hastily*]

But don't be rash! The Khan probably meant whenever you were willing. And don't mind what I just said.

KUKACHIN

[*Looks at him with a sudden dawning of hope—gently*]

Why should you be afraid of what you said?

MARCO

[*Offended*]

I'm not afraid of anything—when it comes to the point!

KUKACHIN

What point?

MARCO

[*Nonplussed*]

Why—well—when I feel someone's trying to steal what's rightfully mine, for instance.

KUKACHIN

And now—here—you do not feel that?

MARCO

[*With a forced laugh, thinking she is joking*]

Ha! Well—

[*Uncertainly*]

That is—I don't catch your meaning—

[*Then changing the subject abruptly*]

But here's something I want to ask you. Your grandfather entrusted you to my care. He relied on me to prove equal to the task of bringing you safe and sound to your husband. Now I want to ask you frankly if you yourself won't be the first to acknowledge that in spite of typhoons, shipwrecks, pirates and every other known form of bad luck, I've brought you through in good shape?

KUKACHIN

[*With an irony almost hysterical*]

More than anyone in the world, I can appreciate your devotion to duty! You have been a prodigy of heroic accomplishment! In the typhoon when a wave swept me from the deck, was it not you who swam to me as I was drowning?

MARCO

[*Modestly*]

It was easy. Venetians make the best swimmers in the world.

KUKACHIN

[*Even more ironically*]

When the pirates attacked us, was it not your brave sword that warded off their curved knives from my breast and struck them dead at my feet?

MARCO

I was out of practice, too. I used to be one of the crack swordsmen of Venice—and they're the world's foremost, as everyone knows.

KUKACHIN

[*With a sudden change—softly*]

And when the frightful fever wasted me, was it not you who tended me night and day, watching by my bedside like a gentle nurse, even brewing yourself the medicines that brought me back to life?

MARCO

[*With sentimental solemnity*]

My mother's recipes. Simple home remedies—from the best friend I ever had!

KUKACHIN

[*A trifle wildly*]

Oh, yes, you have been a model guardian, Admiral Polo!

MARCO

[*Quickly*]

Thank you, Princess. If I have satisfied you—then if I might ask you a favor, that you put in writing all you've just said in your first letter to the Great Kaan, and also tell your husband?

KUKACHIN

[*Suddenly wildly bitter*]

I will assuredly! I will tell them both of your heroic cruelty in saving me from death!

[*Intensely*]

Why could you not let me die?

MARCO

[*Confusedly*]

You're joking. You certainly didn't want to die, did you?

KUKACHIN

[*Slowly and intensely*]

Yes!

MARCO

[*Puzzled and severe*]

Hum! You shouldn't talk that way.

KUKACHIN

[*Longingly*]

I would be asleep in green water!

MARCO

[*Worriedly, suddenly reaches out and takes her hand*]

Here now, young lady! Don't start getting morbid!

KUKACHIN

[*With a thrill of love*]

Marco!

MARCO

I believe you're feverish. Let me feel your pulse!

KUKACHIN

[*Violently*]

No!

[*She draws her hand from his as if she had been stung*]

MARCO

[*Worriedly*]

Please don't be unreasonable. There'd be the devil to pay if you should suffer a relapse of that fever after I sweated blood to pull you through once already! Do you feel hot?

KUKACHIN

[*Wildly*]

No! Yes! On fire!

MARCO

Are your feet cold?

KUKACHIN

No! Yes! I don't know!

[*Gravely* MARCO *kneels, removes a slipper, and feels the sole of her foot—then pats her foot playfully*]

MARCO

No. They're all right.

[*He gets up—professionally*]

Any cramps?

KUKACHIN

You fool! No! Yes! My heart feels as if it were bursting!

MARCO

It burns?

KUKACHIN

Like a red ember flaring up for the last time before it chills into gray ash forever!

MARCO

Then something must have disagreed with you. Will you let me see your tongue?

KUKACHIN

[*In a queer hysterical state where she delights in self-humiliation*]

Yes! Yes! Anything! I am a Princess of the Imperial blood of Chinghiz and you are a dog! Anything!

[*She sticks out her tongue, the tears streaming down her face as he looks at it*]

MARCO

[*Shakes his head*]

No sign of biliousness. There's nothing seriously wrong. If you would only try to sleep a while—

KUKACHIN

O Celestial God of the Heavens! What have I done that Thou shouldst torture me?

[*Then wildly to* MARCO]

I wished to sleep in the depths of the sea. Why did you awaken me?

MARCO

[*Worried again*]

Perhaps it's brain fever. Does your head ache?

KUKACHIN

No! Does your immortal soul?

MARCO

Don't blaspheme! You're talking as if you were delirious!

[*Then pleadingly*]

For Heaven's sake, try and be calm, Princess! What if your husband, Ghazan Khan, should find you in such a state?

KUKACHIN

[*Calming herself with difficulty—after a pause, bitterly*]

I suppose you are relieved to get me here alive and deliver me—like a cow!

MARCO

[*Injuredly*]

I've only carried out your own grandfather's orders!

KUKACHIN

[*Forcing a smile*]

Won't you miss being my guardian?

[*Striving pitifully to arouse his jealousy*]

When you think of Ghazan protecting me and nursing me when I am sick—and—and loving me? Yes! I will compel him to love me, even though I never love him! He shall look into my eyes and see that I am a woman and beautiful!

MARCO

That's a husband's privilege.

KUKACHIN

Or a man's—a man who has a soul!

[*Mockingly but intensely*]

And that reminds me, Admiral Polo! You are taking advantage of this being the last day to shirk your duty!

MARCO

Shirk! No one can ever say—!

KUKACHIN

It was my grandfather's special command, given to you by Chu-Yin, you told me, that every day you should look into my eyes.

MARCO

[*Resignedly*]

Well, it isn't too late yet, is it?

[*He moves toward her with a sigh of half-impatience with her whims*]

KUKACHIN

Wait. This is the one part of your duty in which I shall have to report you incompetent.

MARCO

[*Hurt*]

I've done my best. I never could discover anything out of the way.

KUKACHIN

There must be something he wished you to find. I myself feel there is something, something I cannot understand, something you must interpret for me! And remember this is your last chance! There is nothing in life I would not give—nothing I would not do—even now it is not too late! See my eyes as those of a woman and not a Princess! Look deeply! I will die if you do not see what is there!

[*She finishes hysterically and beseechingly*]

MARCO

[*Worried—soothingly*]

There! There! Certainly, Princess! Of course, I'll look. And will you promise me that afterwards you'll lie down?

KUKACHIN

Look! See!

[*She throws her head back, her arms outstretched. He bends over and looks into her eyes. She raises her hands slowly above his head as if she were going to pull it down to hers. Her lips part, her whole being strains out to him. He looks for a moment critically, then he grows tense, his face moves hypnotically toward hers, their lips seem about to meet in a kiss. She murmurs*]

Marco!

MARCO

[*His voice thrilling for this second with oblivious passion*]

Kukachin!

MAFFEO

[*Suddenly slapping a stack of coins into the chest with a resounding clank*]

One million!

MARCO

[*With a start, comes to himself and backs away from the* PRINCESS *in terror*]

What, Uncle? Did you call?

MAFFEO

One million in God's money!

[*He and* NICOLO *lock and fasten the box jubilantly*]

KUKACHIN

[*In despair*]

Marco!

MARCO

[*Flusteredly*]

Yes, Princess. I saw something queer! It made me feel feverish too!

[*Recovering a bit—with a sickly smile*]

Oh, there's trouble there, all right! You must be delirious! I advise you to go to sleep.

KUKACHIN

[*With wild despair pulls out a small dagger from the bosom of her dress*]

I obey! I shall sleep forever!

[*But* MARCO, *the man of action, springs forward and wresting the dagger from her hand, flings it over the side. She confronts him defiantly, her eyes wild with grief and rage. He stares at her, dumbfounded and bewildered*]

MARCO

[*Bewilderedly*]

I never believed people—sane people—ever seriously tried—

KUKACHIN

[*Intensely*]

I implored an ox to see my soul! I no longer can endure the shame of living!

MARCO

[*Sheepishly*]

You mean it was a terrible insult when I called you—by your name?

KUKACHIN

[*Bursting into hysterical laughter*]

Yes! How dared you!

MARCO

[*Hastily*]

I ask pardon, Princess! Please forgive me! My only excuse is, I forgot myself. I guess I'll have to stop overworking or I'll suffer a nervous breakdown. I felt like one of those figures in

a puppet show with someone jerking the wires. It wasn't me, you understand. My lips spoke without me saying a word. And here's the funniest part of it all, and what'll explain matters in full, if you can believe it. It wasn't you I was seeing and talking to, not a Princess at all, you'd changed into someone else, someone I've got a good right to—just a girl—

KUKACHIN

[*Again clutching at hope*]

A girl—a woman—you saw in me?

MARCO

[*Enthusiastically, groping in his shirt front*]

Yes. Here she is!

[*He jerks the locket out of an under pocket and presents it to her proudly*]

The future Mrs. Marco Polo!

[*The* PRINCESS *takes it mechanically and stares at it in a stupor as* MARCO *rambles on*]

MARCO

You may believe it or not but like a flash she was standing there in your place and I was talking to her, not you at all!

KUKACHIN

[*Dully*]

But it was my name you spoke.

MARCO

[*Confused*]

I meant to say Donata. That's her name. We're going to be married as soon as I get home.

[*Then as she stares at the miniature—proudly*]

Pretty, isn't she?

KUKACHIN

[*Dully*]

She may have married another.

MARCO

[*Confidently*]

No. Her family needs an alliance with our house.

KUKACHIN

She may have had lovers.

MARCO

[*Simply*]

Oh, no. She's not that kind.

KUKACHIN

[*Staring at the picture*]

She will be middle-aged—fat—and stupid!

MARCO

[*With a grin*]

Well, I don't mind a wife being a bit plump—and who wants a great thinker around the house? Sound common sense and a home where everything runs smooth, that's what I'm after.

KUKACHIN

[*Looks from him to the miniature*]

There is no soul even in your love, which is no better than a mating of swine! And I—!

[*A spasm of pain covers her face—then with hatred and disdain*]

Pig of a Christian! Will you return to this sow and boast that a Princess and a Queen—?

[*With rage*]

Shall I ask as my first wedding present from Ghazan Khan

that he have you flayed and thrown into the street to be devoured by dogs?

MAFFEO AND NICOLO

[*Who have pricked up their ears at this last, rush to the* PRINCESS, *dragging their box between them and prostrate themselves at her feet*]

Mercy! Mercy!

[*She seems not to hear or to see them but stares ahead stonily.* MARCO *beckons* MAFFEO *to one side.*]

MARCO

[*In a whisper*]

Don't be afraid. She doesn't mean a word of it. She's hysterical. Listen, I just noticed the royal barge coming. I'll go and meet the Khan. You keep her from doing anything rash until he gets here.

MAFFEO

Yes.

[*He goes back and crouches again before the* PRINCESS, *keeping a wary eye on her, but she seems turned to stone.* MARCO *comes down and goes off Left. There is the blare of a trumpet, the reflections of lanterns and torches, the sound of runinng about on deck and* MARCO'S *voice giving commands. The* WOMEN *come out to attend the* PRINCESS. *She remains rigid, giving no sign*]

WOMEN

[*In chorus*]

The lover comes,
Who becomes a husband,
Who becomes a son,

Who becomes a father—
In this contemplation lives the woman.

KUKACHIN

[*Her face now a fatalistic mask of acceptance*]

I am not.
Life is.
A cloud hides the sun.
A life is lived.
The sun shines again.
Nothing has changed.
Centuries wither into tired dust.
A new dew freshens the grass.
Somewhere this dream is being dreamed.

[*From the left* MARCO *comes escorting* GHAZAN KHAN, *attended by a train of nobles and slaves with lights. He can be heard saying: "She is a little feverish—the excitement—" All are magnificently dressed, glittering with jewels.* GHAZAN *is a young man, not handsome but noble and manly looking. He comes forward and bows low before her, his attendants likewise. Then he looks into her face and stands fascinated by her beauty. She looks back at him with a calm indifference*]

GHAZAN

[*After a pause—his voice thrilling with admiration*]

If it were possible for a son who loved a noble father to rejoice at that father's death, then I should be that guilty son!

[*As she makes no reply*]

You have heard? Arghun Khan is dead. You must bear the humiliation of accepting his son for husband, a crow to replace an eagle! Forgive me. But with your eyes to watch I may become at least a shadow of his greatness.

KUKACHIN

[*Calmly*]

What am I? I shall obey the eternal will which governs your destiny and mine.

GHAZAN

[*Impetuously*]

You are more beautiful than I had dared to dream! It shall not be I who rules, but you! I shall be your slave! Persia shall be your conquest and everywhere where songs are sung they shall be in praise of your beauty! You shall be Queen of Love—!

KUKACHIN

[*Sharply with pain*]

No!

[*She drops the locket on the floor and grinds it into pieces under her foot*]

MARCO

[*Excitedly*]

Princess! Look out! You're stepping on—

[*She kicks it away from her.* MARCO *stoops on his knees and begins picking up the wreckage in his handkerchief.* KUKACHIN *turns to* GHAZAN *and points to* MARCO]

My first request of you, my Lord, is that you reward this Christian who has brought me here in safety. I ask, as a fitting tribute to his character, that you give an immense feast in his honor. Let there be food in tremendous amounts! He is an exquisite judge of quantity. Let him be urged to eat and drink until he can hold no more, until he becomes his own ideal figure, an idol of stuffed self-satisfaction! Will you do this?

[*She is a trifle hectic now and her manner has grown wilder*]

GHAZAN

Your wish is my will!

KUKACHIN

[*Pointing to a magnificent lion in diamonds on his breast*]
What is that wonderful glittering beast?

GHAZAN

It is the emblem of the Order of the Lion which only great heroes and kings of men may wear.

KUKACHIN

[*Gives a laugh of wild irony*]
Great heroes—kings of men?

[*Then eagerly*]
Will you give it to me? I implore you!

[GHAZAN, *fascinated, yet with a wondering glance, unpins it and hands it to her without a word. She prods* MARCO, *who is still collecting the pieces of the locket with her foot*]

Arise! Let me give you the noble Order of the Lion!

[*She pins the blazing diamond figure on the breast of the stunned* MARCO, *laughing with bitter mockery*]

How well it is set off on the bosom of a sheep!

[*She laughs more wildly*]
Kneel again! Bring me a chest of gold!

[GHAZAN *makes a sign. Two slaves bring a chest of gold coins to her. She takes handfuls and throws them over the kneeling forms of the* POLOS, *laughing*]

Here! Guzzle! Grunt! Wallow for our amusement!

[*The two elder are surreptitiously snatching at the coins but* MARCO *jumps to his feet, his face flushing*]

MARCO

[*In a hurt tone*]

I don't see why you're trying to insult me—just at the last moment. What have I done?

[*Then suddenly forcing a smile*]

But I realize you're not yourself.

GHAZAN

[*Sensing something*]

Has this man offended you? Shall he be killed?

KUKACHIN

[*Wearily*]

No. He has amused me. Let him be fed. Stuff him with food and gold and send him home. And you, My Lord, may I ask that this first night I be allowed to remain on board alone with my women? I am weary!

GHAZAN

Again your wish is my will, even though I will not live until I see you again!

KUKACHIN

[*Exhaustedly*]

I am humbly grateful. Good night, My Lord.

[*She bows.* GHAZAN *and the Court bow before her. They retire toward the left,* MARCO *talking earnestly to the oblivious* GHAZAN *whose eyes are riveted on the* PRINCESS, *who has turned away from them. The two elder* POLOS, *carrying their chest, their pockets stuffed, trudge along last*]

MARCO

The close confinement of a long voyage. I think probably her spleen is out of order.

[*They are gone from sight.* KUKACHIN'S *shoulders quiver as, her head bowed in her hands, she sobs quietly. The ship can be heard making off*]

WOMEN

Weep, Princess of the Wounded Heart,
Weeping heals the wounds of sorrow
Till only the scars remain
And the heart forgets.

KUKACHIN

[*Suddenly runs up to the upper deck and stands outlined against the sky, her arms outstretched—in a voice which is a final, complete renunciation, calls*]

Farewell, Marco Polo!

MARCO

[*His voice comes from over the water, cheery and relieved*]

Good-bye, Your Majesty—and all best wishes for long life and happiness!

[*The* PRINCESS *sinks to her knees, her face hidden in her arms on the bulwark*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

Scene One

Scene: *One year later.*

The Grand Throne Room in the Imperial palace at Cambaluc. Kublai *squats on his throne, aged and sad, listening with an impassive face to* General Bayan *who, dressed in the full military uniform and armor of the Commander-in-Chief is explaining earnestly with several maps in his hand. On* Kublai's *left stands* Chu-Yin, *who is reading. Behind* Bayan *are grouped at attention all the generals of his army with a multitude of young staff officers, all gorgeously uniformed and armored. From the room on the right, the ballroom, a sound of dance music and laughter comes through the closed doors.*

BAYAN

[*Impressively—pointing to the map*]

Here, Your Majesty, is the line of the river Danube which marks the Western boundary of your Empire. Beyond it, lies the West. Our spies report their many petty states are always quarreling. So great is their envy of each other that we could crush each singly and the rest would rejoice. We can mobilize one million horsemen on the Danube within a month.

[*Proudly*]

We would ride their armies down into the sea! Your Empire would extend from ocean to ocean!

KUBLAI

[*Wearily*]

It is much too large already. Why do you want to conquer the West? It must be a pitiful land, poor in spirit and material wealth. We have everything to lose by contact with its greedy hypocrisy. The conqueror acquires first of all the vices of the conquered. Let the West devour itself.

BAYAN

[*Helplessly*]

But—everywhere in the East there is peace!

KUBLAI

[*With hopeless irony*]

Ah! And you are becoming restless?

BAYAN

[*Proudly*]

I am a Mongol—a man of action!

KUBLAI

[*Looking at him with musing irony*]

Hum! You have already conquered the West, I think.

BAYAN

[*Puzzled*]

What, Your Majesty?

[*Then persuasively*]

The West may not be strong but it is crafty. Remember how that Christian, Polo, invented the engine to batter down walls? It would be better to wipe out their cunning now before they make too many engines to weaken the power of men.

[*Then with a sudden inspiration*]

And it would be a righteous war! We would tear down their Christian Idols and set up the image of the Buddha!

KUBLAI

Buddha, the Prince of Peace?

BAYAN

[*Bowing his head as do all his retinue*]

The Gentle One, The Good, The Kind, The Pitiful, The Merciful, The Wise, The Eternal Contemplative One!

KUBLAI

In His Name?

BAYAN

[*Fiercely*]

Death to those who deny Him!

ALL

[*With a great fierce shout and a clanking of swords*]

Death!

KUBLAI

[*Looks up at the ceiling quizzically*]

A thunderbolt?

[*Waits*]

No? Then there is no God!

[*Then to* BAYAN *with a cynical bitter smile*]

August Commander, if you must have war, let it be one without fine phrases—a practical war of few words, as that Polo you admire would say. Leave the West alone. Our interests do not conflict—yet. But there is a group of islands whose silk industry is beginning to threaten the supremacy of our own. Lead your gallant million there—and see to it your war leaves me in peace!

BAYAN

I hear and I obey!

[*He turns to his staff exultantly*]

His Majesty has declared war!

ALL

[*With a fierce cheer*]

Down with the West!

BAYAN

[*Hastily*]

No. Not yet. Down with Japan!

[*They cheer with equal enthusiasm—then he harangues them with the air of a patriotic exhorter*]

His Majesty's benevolence and patience have been exhausted by the continued outrages against our silk nationals perpetrated by unscrupulous Japanese trade-pirates who, in spite of his protests, are breeding and maintaining silkworms for purposes of aggression! We fight in the cause of moral justice, that our silk-makers may preserve their share of the eternal sunlight!

[*A long cheer*]

KUBLAI

[*Smiling—distractedly*]

War without rhetoric, please! Polo has infected you with cant! The West already invades us! Throw open the doors! Music!

[*The doors are thrown open. The dance music sounds loudly*]

Go in and dance, everyone! You, too, General! I revoke my declaration of war—unless you learn to dance and be silent!

[*They all go into the ballroom,* BAYAN *stalking majestically with an injured mien*]

But dancing makes me remember Kukachin whose little dancing feet—! Shut the doors! Music brings back her voice singing!

[*Turning to* Chu-Yin—*harshly*]

Wisdom! No, do not read! What good are wise writings to fight stupidity? One must have stupid writings that men can understand. In order to live even wisdom must be stupid!

A CHAMBERLAIN

[*Enters hurriedly and prostrates himself*]

A courier from Persia!

KUBLAI

[*Excitedly*]

From Kukachin! Bring him here!

[*The* Chamberlain *dashes to the door and a moment later the* Courier *enters, travel-stained and weary. He sinks into a heap before the throne.* Kublai *shouts at him impatiently*]

KUBLAI

Have you a letter?

COURIER

[*With a great effort holds out a letter*]

Here!

[*He collapses.* Chu-Yin *hands the letter up to* Kublai *who takes it eagerly from him. He begins to read at once. The* Chamberlain *comes back with a cup of wine. The* Courier *is revived and gets to his knees, waiting humbly*]

CHU-YIN

[*Goes back to* Kublai *who has finished reading the short note and is staring somberly before him*]

And did the Little Flower save his Immortal Soul?

[Kublai *does not look at him but mutely hands him the letter.* Chu-Yin *becomes grave. He reads aloud*]

"Arghun had died. I am the wife of his son, Ghazan. It does not matter. He is kind but I miss my home and you. I doubt if I shall be blessed with a son. I do not care. I have lost my love of life. My heart beats more and more wearily. Death wooes me. You must not grieve. You wish me to be happy, do you not? And my body may resist Death for a long time yet. Too long. My soul he has already possessed. I wish to commend the unremitting attention to his duty of Admiral Polo. He saved my life three times at the risk of his own. He delivered me to Ghazan. Send him another million. You were right about his soul. What I had mistaken for one I discovered to be a fat woman with a patient virtue. By the time you receive this they will be married in Venice. I do not blame him. But I cannot forgive myself—nor forget—nor believe again in any beauty in the world. I love you the best in life. And tell Chu-Yin I love him too."

[*He lets the letter in his hand drop to his side, his eyes filling, his voice grown husky.* KUBLAI *stares bleakly ahead of him*]

KUBLAI

[*At last rouses himself—harshly to the* COURIER]

Did the Queen give you this in person?

COURIER

Yes, Your Majesty—with a generous gift.

KUBLAI

I can be generous too. Did she appear—ill?

COURIER

Yes. I could scarcely hear her voice.

KUBLAI

You brought no other word?

COURIER

Not from the Queen. I came privately from her. But Admiral Polo suspected my departure and gave me a verbal message which he caused me to memorize.

KUBLAI

[*Harshly—his eyes beginning to gleam with anger*]

Ha! Go on! Repeat!

COURIER

[*Stopping for a moment to freshen his memory*]

He said, tell the Great Kaan that "in spite of perils too numerous to relate, I have delivered my charge safely to Ghazan Khan. In general, she gave but little trouble on the voyage, for although flighty in temper and of a passionate disposition, she never refused to heed my advice for her welfare and as I informed His Majesty, King Ghazan, the responsibilities of marriage and the duties of motherhood will sober her spirit and she will settle down as a sensible wife should. This much I further add, that in humble obedience to your final instructions given me by Mr. Chu-Yin, I looked daily into her eyes."

KUBLAI

[*Bewilderedly to* CHU-YIN]

What? Did you—?

CHU-YIN

[*Miserably*]

Forgive an old fool! I meant it partly in jest as a last chance —to cure her—or to awaken him.

COURIER

[*Continuing*]

"But I have never noted any unnatural change in them except toward the termination of our trip, particularly on the last day,

when I noticed a rather strained expression but this I took to be fever due to her Highness's spleen being sluggish after the long confinement on shipboard."

KUBLAI

[*Choking with wrath*]

O God of the Somber Heavens!

COURIER

And he gave me no money for delivering the message but he promised that you would reward me nobly.

KUBLAI

[*With wild laughter*]

Ha-ha-ha! Stop! Do you dare to madden me?

[*Then suddenly raging*]

Out of my sight, dog, before I have you impaled!

[*The terror-stricken* COURIER *scrambles out like a flash.* KUBLAI *stands up with flashing eyes—revengefully*]

I have reconsidered! I shall conquer the West! I shall lead my armies in person! I shall not leave one temple standing nor one Christian alive who is not enslaved! Their cities shall vanish in flame, their fields shall be wasted! Famine shall finish what I leave undone! And of the city of Venice not one vestige shall remain! And of the body of Marco Polo there shall not be a fragment of bone nor an atom of flesh which will not have shrieked through ten days' torture before it died!

CHU-YIN

Master!

[*He throws himself on his face at* KUBLAI's *feet*]

Do not torture yourself! Is this Wisdom? Is this the peace of the soul?

KUBLAI

[*Distractedly*]

To revenge oneself—that brings a kind of peace!

CHU-YIN

To revenge equally the wrong of an equal perhaps, but this—? Can you confess yourself weaker than his stupidity?

KUBLAI

He has murdered her!

CHU-YIN

She does not accuse him. What would be her wish?

KUBLAI

[*His anger passing—wearily and bitterly, after a pause*]

Rise, my old friend, it is I who should be at your feet, not you at mine!

[*He sinks dejectedly on his throne again. After a pause, sadly*]

She will die. Why is this? What purpose can it serve? My hideous suspicion is that God is only an infinite, insane energy which creates and destroys without other purpose than to pass eternity in avoiding thought. Then the stupid man becomes the Perfect Incarnation of Omnipotence and the Polos are the true children of God!

[*He laughs bitterly*]

Ha! How long before we shall be permitted to die, my friend? I begin to resent life as the insult of an ignoble inferior with whom it is a degradation to fight!

[*Broodingly—after a pause*]

I have had a foreboding she would die. Lately, to while away time, I experimented with the crystal. I do not believe the magic nonsense about it but I do consider that, given a focus,

the will can perhaps overcome the limits of the senses. Whatever the explanation be, I looked into the crystal and willed to see Kukachin in Persia and she appeared, sitting alone in a garden, beautiful and sad, apart from life, waiting—

[*Brokenly*]

My eyes filled with tears. I cried out to her—and she was gone!

[*Then suddenly—to the* CHAMBERLAIN]

Bring me the crystal!

[*To* CHU-YIN *as the* CHAMBERLAIN *goes*]

Marco, the true ruler of the world, will have come to Venice by this time. My loathing grows so intense I feel he must jump into the crystal at my bidding. And—in the cause of wisdom, say—we must see what he is doing now.

[*The* CHAMBERLAIN *returns with the crystal.* KUBLAI *takes it eagerly from his hand and stares fixedly into it*]

CHU-YIN

[*Protestingly*] DON'T HURT

Why do you wish to hurt yourself further? YOURSELF.

KUBLAI HAPPY MEMORIES

[*Staring fixedly*] ARE BETTER.

I shall observe dispassionately. It is a test of myself I want to make as a penalty for my weakness a moment ago.

[*He sees something*]

Ah—it begins.

[*A pause. The light grows dimmer and dimmer on the stage proper as it begins to come up on the extreme foreground*]

I see—a city whose streets are canals—it is evening—a house. I begin to see through the walls— Ah!

[*The lights come up again on the back stage as the forestage is fully revealed. The* KAAN *on his throne and* CHU-YIN *are seen dimly, behind and above, like beings on another plane. At the center of the forestage is a great banquet table garishly set with an ornate gold service. A tall majordomo in a gorgeous uniform enters and stands at attention as the procession begins. First come the Guests, male and female, a crowd of good substantial bourgeois, who stare about with awe and envy and are greatly impressed by the gold plate*]

A MAN

They've laid out a pile of money here!

A WOMAN

Is that gold service really gold?

ANOTHER

Absolutely. I can tell without biting it.

A MAN

They must have cash, whoever they are.

A WOMAN

Do you think they're really the Polos?

ANOTHER

They looked like greasy Tartars to me.

ANOTHER

That was their queer clothes.

A MAN

And remember they've been gone twenty-odd years.

ANOTHER

In spite of that, I thought I could recognize Maffeo.

A WOMAN

Will Donata know Marco, I wonder?

A MAN

What's more to her point, will he recognize her?

A WOMAN

Imagine her waiting all this time!

ANOTHER

How romantic! He must be terribly rich—if it's really him.

A MAN

We'll soon know. That's why we were invited.

A WOMAN

Ssshh! Here comes Donata now. How old she's getting to look!

ANOTHER

And how fat in the hips!

A MAN

[*Jokingly*]

That's the way I like 'em, and perhaps Marco—

[DONATA *enters on the arm of her father, a crafty, wizened old man. She has grown into a stout middle-age but her face is unlined and still pretty in a bovine, good-natured way. All bow and they return this salutation*]

ALL

Congratulations, Donata!

[*She blushes and turns aside in an incongruous girlish confusion*]

FATHER

[*Proud but pretending querulousness*]

Don't tease her now! The girl's nervous enough already. And it may not be Marco after all but only a joke someone's put up on us.

A WOMAN

No one could be so cruel!

ALL

[*Suddenly with a great gasp*]

Oh, listen!

[*An orchestra vigorously begins a flowery, sentimental Italian tune. This grows into quite a blare as the musicians enter from the right, six in number, in brilliant uniforms*]

Oh, look!

[*The musicians form a line, three on each side by the stairs on right*]

Oh, see!

[*A procession of servants begins to file one by one through the ranks of musicians, each carrying on his head or upraised hand an enormous platter on which are whole pigs, fowl of all varieties, roasts, vegetables, salads, fruits, nuts, dozens of bottles of wine. The servants arrange these on the table, in symmetrical groups, with the trained eye for display of window-dressers, until the table, with the bright light flooding down on it, closely resembles the front of a pretentious delicatessen store. Meanwhile*]

See! What a turkey! Such a goose! The fattest pig I ever saw! What ducks! What vegetables! Look at the wine! A feast for the Gods! And all those servants! An army! And the orchestra! What expense! Lavish! They must be worth millions!

[*The three* POLOS *make their grand entrance from the stairs on right, walking with bursting self-importance*

between the files of musicians who now blare out a triumphant march. The two elder precede MARCO. *All three are dressed in long robes of embroidered crimson satin reaching almost to the ground. The guests give a new united gasp of astonishment*]

Is it they? Is that old Nicolo? That's Maffeo's nose! No! It isn't them at all! Well, if it's a joke, I don't see the point. But such robes! Such hand embroidery! Such material! They must be worth millions!

DONATA

[*Falteringly*]

Is that him, father? I can't tell.

[*She calls faintly*]

Marco!

[*But he pretends not to hear. He gives a sign at which the three take off their robes and hand them to the servants. They have even more gorgeous blue ones underneath.* MARCO *addresses the servants in a false voice*]

MARCO

My good men, you may sell these rich robes and divide the proceeds among yourselves! And here is a little something extra.

[*He tosses a handful of gold to the servants and another to the musicians. A mad scramble results. The guests gasp. They seem inclined to join in the scramble*]

GUESTS

How generous! What prodigality! What indifference to money! They throw it away like dirt. They must be worth millions!

MARCO

[*In the same false voice*]

Our guests look thirsty. Pass around the wine.

[*The servants do so. The guests gaze, smell, taste*]

ALL

What a vintage! What flavor! What bouquet! How aged! It must have cost twenty lire a bottle!

[*At another signal the three* POLOS *take off their blue robes*]

MARCO

[*Regally*]

Give those to the musicians!

[*They are revealed now in their old dirty, loose Tartar traveling dress and look quite shabby. The guests gape uncertainly. Then* MARCO *declares grandly*]

You look astonished, good people, but this is a moral lesson to teach you not to put too much faith in appearances, for behold!

[*He slits up the wide sleeves of his own robe, as do his father and uncle, and now the three, standing beside a big empty space which has been purposely left at the very center of the table at the front, lower their opened sleeves, and, as the musicians, obeying this signal, start up a great blare, let pour from them a perfect stream of precious stones which forms a glittering multicolored heap. This is the final blow. The guests stare pop-eyed, open-mouthed, speechless for a second. Then their pent-up admiration breaks forth*]

ALL

Extraordinary! Jewels! Gems! Rubies! Emeralds! Diamonds! Pearls! A king's ransom! Millions!

MARCO

[*Suddenly with his hail-fellow-well-met joviality*]

Well, folks, are you all tongue-tied? Isn't one of you going to say welcome home? And Miss Donata, don't I get a kiss? I'm still a bachelor!

[*Immediately with mad shouts of "Bravo!" "Welcome home!" "Hurrah for the Polos!" etc., etc., the guests bear down on them in a flood. There is a confused whirl of embraces, kisses, back-slaps, handshakes and loud greetings of all sorts.* MARCO *manages to get separated and pulls* DONATA *down front to the foreground*]

DONATA

[*Half swooning*]

Marco!

MARCO

[*Moved*]

My old girl!

[*They kiss, then he pushes her away*]

Here! Let me get a good look at you! Why, you're still as pretty as a picture and you don't look a day older!

DONATA

[*Exaltedly*]

My beloved prince!

MARCO

[*Jokingly*]

No, if I was a prince I'd never have remained single all these years in the East! I'm a hero, that's what! And all the twenty-

odd years I kept thinking of you, and I was always intending to write—

[*He pulls the pieces of the miniature wrapped in the handkerchief out of his pocket*]

Here's proof for you! Look at yourself! You're a bit smashed but that was done in a hand-to-hand fight with pirates. Now don't I deserve another kiss?

DONATA

[*Giving it*]

My hero!

[*Then jealously*]

But I know all the heathen women must have fallen in love with you.

MARCO

Oh, maybe one or two or so—but I didn't have time to waste on females. I kept my nose to the grindstone every minute.

[*Proudly*]

And I got results. I don't mind telling you, Donata, I'm worth over two millions! How's that for keeping my promise? Worth while your waiting, eh?

[*He slaps her on the back*]

DONATA

Yes, my wonder boy!

[*Then worriedly*]

You said there were one or two women? But you were true in spite of them, weren't you?

MARCO

I tell you I wouldn't have married the prettiest girl in Cathay!

[*This with emphasis. Then abruptly*]

But never mind any other girl.

[*He chucks her under the chin*]

What I want to know is when this girl is going to marry me?

DONATA

[*Softly*]

Any time!

[*They hug. The guests group about them kittenishly, pointing and murmuring, "What a romance! What a romance!"*]

DONATA'S FATHER

[*Seizing the opportunity*]

Friends, I take this opportunity to publicly announce the betrothal of my daughter, Donata, to Marco Polo of this City!

[*Another wild round of congratulations, kisses, etc.*]

MARCO

[*His voice sounding above the hubbub*]

Let's eat, friends!

[*They swirl to their places behind the long table. When they stand their faces can be seen above the piles of food but when they sit they are out of sight*]

No ceremony among friends. Just pick your chair. All ready? Let's sit down then!

[*With one motion they disappear*]

VOICE OF DONATA'S FATHER

But, first, before we regale ourselves with your cheer, won't you address a few words to your old friends and neighbors who have gathered here on this happy occasion?

[*Applause.* MARCO *is heard expostulating but finally he gives in*]

MARCO

All right, if you'll promise to go ahead and eat and not wait for me.

[*His head appears, his expression full of importance. Servants flit about noisily. He coughs and begins with dramatic feeling*]

My friend and neighbors of old, your generous and wholehearted welcome touches me profoundly. I would I had the gift of oratory to thank you fittingly, but I am a simple man, an ordinary man, I might almost say,—a man of affairs used to dealing in the hard facts of life, a silent man given to deeds not words—

[*Here he falters fittingly*]

And so now—forgive my emotion—words fail me—

[*Here he clears his throat with an important cough and bursts forth into a memorized speech in the grand Chamber of Commerce style*]

But I'll be glad to let you have a few instructive facts about the silk industry as we observed it in the Far East, laying especial emphasis upon the keystone of the whole silk business —I refer to the breeding of worms!

[*A few hungry guests start to eat. Knives and forks and spoons rattle against plates. Soup is heard.* MARCO *strikes a good listening attitude so he will be sure not to miss a word his voice utters and warms to his work*]

Now, to begin with, there are millions upon millions of capital invested in this industry, millions of contented slaves labor unremittingly millions of hours per annum to obtain the best results in the weaving and dyeing of the finished product, but I don't hesitate to state that all this activity is relatively un-

important beside the astounding fact that in the production of the raw material there are constantly employed millions upon millions upon millions of millions of worms!

ONE VOICE

[*Rather muffled by roast pig*]

Hear!

[*But the rest are all absorbed in eating and a perfect clamor of knives and forks resounds.* MARCO *begins again but this time the clamor is too great, his words are lost, only the one he lays such emphasis upon can be distinguished*]

MARCO

Millions! . . . millions! . . . millions! . . . millions!

KUBLAI

[*Who from the height of his golden throne, crystal in hand, has watched all this with fascinated disgust while* CHU-YIN *has sat down to read again, now turns away with a shudder of loathing—and, in spite of himself, a shadow of a smile—and lets the crystal fall from his hand and shatter into bits with a loud report. Instantly there is darkness and from high up in the darkness* KUBLAI'S *voice speaking with a pitying scorn*]

The Word became their flesh, they say. Now all is flesh! And can their flesh become the Word again?

DARKNESS

ACT THREE

Scene Two

Scene: *Grand Throne Room in the Imperial Palace at Cambaluc, about two years later. The walls tower majestically in shadow, their elaborate detail blurred into a background of half-darkness.*

Kublai *sits at the top of his throne, cross-legged in the posture of an idol, motionless, wrapped in contemplation. He wears a simple white robe without adornment of any sort. A brilliant light floods down upon him in one concentrated ray. His eyes are fixed on a catafalque, draped in heavy white silk, which stands in the center of the room, emphasized by another downpouring shaft of light.*

Chu-Yin *stands on the level below, on* Kublai's *left. On the main floor are the nobles and people of the court, grouped as in Act One, Scene Six.*

There is a long pause clamorous with the pealing of the thousands of bells in the city, big and little, near and far. Every figure in the room is as motionless as the Kaan *himself. Their eyes are kept on him with the ardent humility and respect of worship. Behind their impassive faces, one senses a tense expectancy of some sign from the throne. At last,* Kublai *makes a slight but imperious motion of command with his right hand. Immediately the women all turn with arms outstretched toward the catafalque. Their voices rise together in a long, rhythmic wail of mourning; their arms with one motion move slowly up; their voices attain a prolonged note of unbearable poignancy;*

their heads are thrown back, their arms appeal to Heaven in one agonized gesture of despair. Here the KAAN *makes the same barely perceptible sign of command again. The voices are instantly silenced. With one motion, the women throw themselves prostrate on the floor. The bells, except for one slow deep-toned one in the palace itself, are almost instantly hushed. At the same instant, from outside, at first faint, but growing momentarily in volume, comes the sound of funeral music. A moment later the funeral procession enters. The men sink to the cross-legged position of prayer, their heads bowed.*

First come the musicians, nine in number, men in robes of bright red. They are followed by the chorus of nine singers, five men and four women, all of them aged, with bent bodies, their thin, cracked voices accompanying the music in queer, breaking waves of lamentation. These are masked, the men with a male mask of grief, the women with a female. All are dressed in deep black with white edging to their robes. After them comes a troupe of young girls and boys, dressed in white with black edging, moving slowly backward in a gliding, interweaving dance pattern. Their faces are not masked but are fixed in a disciplined, traditional expression of bewildered, uncomprehending grief that is like a mask. They carry silver censers which they swing in unison toward the corpse of the PRINCESS KUKACHIN, *carried on a bier directly behind them on the shoulders of eight princes of the blood in black armor.*

Accompanying the bier, one at each corner, are four priests —the foremost two, a Confucian and a Taoist, the

latter two, a Buddhist and a Moslem. Each walks with bent head reading aloud to himself from his Holy Book. The princes lift the bier of KUKACHIN *to the top of the catafalque. Her body is wrapped in a winding sheet of deep blue, a jeweled golden head-dress is on her black hair, her face is white and clear as a statue's. The young boys and girls place their smoking censers about the catafalque, the incense ascending in clouds about the Princess as if it were bearing her soul with it. The music and the singing cease as the dancers, singers, and musicians form on each side, and to the rear, of the catafalque and sink into attitudes of prayer.*

KUBLAI *speaks to the priests in a voice of command in which is weariness and disbelief.*

KUBLAI

Peace! She does not need your prayers. She was a prayer!

[*With one motion they shut their books, raise their heads and stare before them in silence.* KUBLAI *continues —sadly*]

Can words recall life to her beauty?

[*To the* PRIEST OF TAO]

Priest of Tao, will you conquer death by your mystic Way?

PRIEST OF TAO

[*Bowing his head in submission—fatalistically*]

Which is the greater evil, to possess or to be without? Death is.

CHORUS

[*In an echo of vast sadness*]

Death is.

KUBLAI

[*To the* CONFUCIAN]

Follower of Confucius, the Wise, have you this wisdom?

PRIEST OF CONFUCIUS

[*Slowly*]

Before we know life, how can we know death?

[*Then as the* TAOIST, *submissively*]

Death is.

CHORUS

[*As before*]

Death is.

KUBLAI

[*To the* BUDDHIST PRIEST]

Worshiper of Buddha, can your self-overcoming overcome that greatest overcomer of self?

BUDDHIST PRIEST

This is a thing which no god can bring about: that what is subject to death should not die.

[*Then as the others, submissively*]

Death is.

CHORUS

[*As before*]

Death is.

KUBLAI

[*Wearily*]

And your answer, priest of Islam?

PRIEST OF ISLAM

It is the will of Allah!

[*Submissively*]

Death is.

CHORUS

Death is. Death is. Death is.

[*Their voices die away*]

KUBLAI

[*After a pause*]

What is death?

[*A long pause. His eyes rest in loving contemplation on the body of* KUKACHIN. *Finally he speaks tenderly to her with a sad smile*]

Girl whom we call dead, whose beauty is even in death more living than we, smile with infinite silence upon our speech, smile with infinite forbearance upon our wisdom, smile with infinite remoteness upon our sorrow, smile as a star smiles!

[*His voice appears about to break. A muffled sound of sobbing comes from the prostrate women.* KUBLAI *regains control over his weakness and rises to his feet—with angry self-contempt*]

No more! That is for poets!

[*With overstressed arrogance—assertively*]

I am the Great Kaan!

[*Everyone in the room rises with one motion of assertion*]

CHORUS

[*Accompanied by a clangor of brass from the musicians—recite with discordant vigor*]

Greatest of the Great!
Son of Heaven!
Lord of Earth!
Sovereign of the World!
Ruler over Life and Death!

KUBLAI

[*Silences them by an imperious gesture—and now even the great palace bell is stilled—half-mockingly but assertively*]

The Son of Heaven? Then I should know a prayer. Sovereign of the World? Then I command the World to pray!

[*With one motion all sink to the position of prayer*]

In silence! Prayer is beyond words! Contemplate the eternal life of Life! Pray thus!

[*He himself sinks to the position of prayer—a pause—then slowly*]

In silence—for one concentrated moment—be proud of life! Know in your heart that the living of life can be noble! Know that the dying of death can be noble! Be exalted by life! Be inspired by death! Be humbly proud! Be proudly grateful! Be immortal because life is immortal. Contain the harmony of womb and grave within you! Possess life as a lover—then sleep requited in the arms of death! If you awake, love again! If you sleep on, rest in peace! Who knows which? What does it matter? It is nobler not to know!

[*A pause of silence. He rises to his feet. With one motion all do likewise.* KUBLAI *sits back on his cushions again, withdrawing into contemplation. The Mongol* CHRONICLER *comes forward to fulfill his function of chanting the official lament for the dead. He declaims in a high wailing voice accompanied by the musicians and by the* CHORUS *who sway rhythmically and hum a rising and falling mourning accompaniment*]

CHRONICLER

We lament the shortness of life. Life at its longest is brief enough.

Too brief for the wisdom of joy, too long for the knowledge of sorrow.

Sorrow becomes despair when death comes to the young, untimely.

Oh, that her beauty could live again, that her youth could be born anew.

Our Princess was young as Spring, she was beautiful as a bird or flower.

Cruel when Spring is smitten by Winter, when birds are struck dead in full song, when the budding blossom is blighted!

Alas that our Princess is dead, she was the song of songs, the perfume of perfumes, the perfect one!

Our sobs stifle us, our tears wet the ground, our lamentations sadden the wind from the West.

[*Bows submissively—speaks*]

Yet we must bow humbly before the Omnipotent.

CHORUS

We must be humble.

CHRONICLER

Against Death all Gods are powerless.

CHORUS

All Gods are powerless.

[*Their voices die into silence*]

KUBLAI

[*After a pause—wearily*]

Leave her in peace. Go.

[*The Court leaves silently at his command in a formal,*

expressionless order. The four priests go first, beginning to pray silently again. They are followed by the nobles and officials with their women coming after. Finally the young boys and girls take up their censers and dance their pattern out backward, preceded by the musicians. Only the CHORUS *remain, grouped in a semi-circle behind the catafalque, motionless, and* CHU-YIN *who stays at the left hand of* KUBLAI. *The music fades away.* KUBLAI *takes his eyes from the dead girl with a sigh of bitter irony*]

KUBLAI

Oh, Chu-Yin, my Wise Friend, was the prayer I taught them wisdom?

CHU-YIN

It was the wisdom of pride. It was thy wisdom.

CHORUS

[*Echoing sadly*]

Thy wisdom.

KUBLAI

Was it not truth?

CHU-YIN

It was the truth of power. It was thy truth.

CHORUS

[*As before*]

Thy truth.

KUBLAI

My pride, my power? My wisdom, my truth? For me there remains only—her truth!

[*Then after staring at* KUKACHIN *for a second, bitterly*]

Her truth! She died for love of a fool!

CHU-YIN

No. She loved love. She died for beauty.

KUBLAI

Your words are hollow echoes of the brain. Do not wound me with wisdom. Speak to my heart!

[*Sadly—his eyes again on* KUKACHIN]

Her little feet danced away the stamp of armies. Her smile made me forget the servile grin on the face of the World. In her eyes' mirror I watched myself live protected from life by her affection—a simple old man dying contentedly a little, day after pleasant day.

CHU-YIN

[*Bowing—compassionately*]

Then weep, old man. Be humble and weep for your child. The old should cherish sorrow.

[*He bows again and goes out silently*]

KUBLAI

[*After a pause, gets up and descending from his throne, slowly approaches the catafalque, speaking to the dead girl softly as he does so—with a trembling smile*]

I think you are hiding your eyes, Kukachin. You are a little girl again. You are playing hide and seek. You are pretending. Did we not once play such games together, you and I? You have made your face still, you have made your face cold, you have set your lips in a smile so remote—you are pretending even that you are dead!

[*He is very near her now. His voice breaks—more and more intensely*]

Let us stop playing! It is late. It is time you were asleep. Open your eyes and laugh! Laugh now that the game is over.

Take the blindfold from my dim eyes. Whisper your secret in my ear. I—I am dead and you are living! Weep for me, Kukachin! Weep for the dead!

[*He stretches his arms out to her beseechingly—pauses, standing beside the body, staring down at her; then, after a moment, he passes his hand over her face—tremblingly —with a beautiful tenderness of grief*]

So, little Kukachin—so, Little Flower—you have come back—they could not keep you—you were too homesick—you wanted to return—to gladden my last days—

[*He no longer tries to control his grief. He sobs like a simple old man, bending and kissing his granddaughter on the forehead—with heart-breaking playfulness*]

I bid you welcome home, Little Flower! I bid you welcome home!

[*He weeps, his tears falling on her calm white face*]

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE

The play is over. The lights come up brilliantly in the theatre. In an aisle seat in the first row a MAN *rises, conceals a yawn in his palm, stretches his legs as if they had become cramped by too long an evening, takes his hat from under the seat and starts to go out slowly with the others in the audience. But although there is nothing out of the ordinary in his actions, his appearance excites general comment and surprise for he is dressed as a Venetian merchant of the later Thirteenth Century. In fact, it is none other than* MARCO POLO *himself, looking a bit sleepy, a trifle puzzled, and not a little irritated as his thoughts, in spite of himself, cling for a passing moment to the play just ended. He appears quite unaware of being unusual and walks in the crowd without self-consciousness, very much as one of them. Arrived in the lobby his face begins to clear of all disturbing memories of what had happened on the stage. The noise, the lights of the streets, recall him at once to himself. Impatiently he waits for his car, casting a glance here and there at faces in the groups around him, his eyes impersonally speculative, his bearing stolid with the dignity of one who is sure of his place in the world. His car, a luxurious limousine, draws up at the curb. He gets in briskly, the door is slammed, the car edges away into the traffic and* MARCO POLO, *with a satisfied sigh at the sheer comfort of it all, resumes his life.*

THE END

There are many Marco P[illegible]

HOW TRUE. AND KUKACHINS, TOO.

I ENJOYED READING IT, GWEN. THANKS!

THE EMPEROR JONES

(1920)

CHARACTERS

BRUTUS JONES, *Emperor*

HENRY SMITHERS, *A Cockney Trader*

AN OLD NATIVE WOMAN

LEM, *A Native Chief*

SOLDIERS, *Adherents of Lem*

The Little Formless Fears; Jeff; The Negro Convicts; The Prison Guard; The Planters; The Auctioneer; The Slaves; The Congo Witch-Doctor; The Crocodile God.

The action of the play takes place on an island in the West Indies as yet not self-determined by White Marines. The form of native government is, for the time being, an Empire.

SCENES

SCENE I: In the palace of the Emperor Jones. Afternoon.

SCENE II: The edge of the Great Forest. Dusk.

SCENE III: In the Forest. Night.

SCENE IV: In the Forest. Night.

SCENE V: In the Forest. Night.

SCENE VI: In the Forest. Night.

SCENE VII: In the Forest. Night.

SCENE VIII: Same as Scene Two—the edge of the Great Forest. Dawn.

THE EMPEROR JONES

SCENE ONE

The audience chamber in the palace of the Emperor—a spacious, high-ceilinged room with bare, white-washed walls. The floor is of white tiles. In the rear, to the left of center, a wide archway giving out on a portico with white pillars. The palace is evidently situated on high ground for beyond the portico nothing can be seen but a vista of distant hills, their summits crowned with thick groves of palm trees. In the right wall, center, a smaller arched doorway leading to the living quarters of the palace. The room is bare of furniture with the exception of one huge chair made of uncut wood which stands at center, its back to rear. This is very apparently the Emperor's throne. It is painted a dazzling, eye-smiting scarlet. There is a brilliant orange cushion on the seat and another smaller one is placed on the floor to serve as a footstool. Strips of matting, dyed scarlet, lead from the foot of the throne to the two entrances.

It is late afternoon but the sunlight still blazes yellowly beyond the portico and there is an oppressive burden of exhausting heat in the air.

As the curtain rises, a native negro woman sneaks in cautiously from the entrance on the right. She is very old, dressed in cheap calico, bare-footed, a red bandana handkerchief covering all but a few stray wisps of white hair. A bundle bound in

colored cloth is carried over her shoulder on the end of a stick. She hesitates beside the doorway, peering back as if in extreme dread of being discovered. Then she begins to glide noiselessly, a step at a time, toward the doorway in the rear. At this moment, SMITHERS *appears beneath the portico.*

SMITHERS *is a tall, stoop-shouldered man about forty. His bald head, perched on a long neck with an enormous Adam's apple, looks like an egg. The tropics have tanned his naturally pasty face with its small, sharp features to a sickly yellow, and native rum has painted his pointed nose to a startling red. His little, washy-blue eyes are red-rimmed and dart about him like a ferret's. His expression is one of unscrupulous meanness, cowardly and dangerous. He is dressed in a worn riding suit of dirty white drill, puttees, spurs, and wears a white cork helmet. A cartridge belt with an automatic revolver is around his waist. He carries a riding whip in his hand. He sees the woman and stops to watch her suspiciously. Then, making up his mind, he steps quickly on tiptoe into the room. The woman, looking back over her shoulder continually, does not see him until it is too late. When she does* SMITHERS *springs forward and grabs her firmly by the shoulder. She struggles to get away, fiercely but silently.*

SMITHERS. (*tightening his grasp—roughly*) Easy! None o' that, me birdie. You can't wriggle out, now I got me 'ooks on yer.

WOMAN. (*seeing the uselessness of struggling, gives way to frantic terror, and sinks to the ground, embracing his knees supplicatingly*) No tell him! No tell him, Mister!

SMITHERS. (*with great curiosity*) Tell 'im? (*Then scorn-*

fully) Oh, you mean 'is bloomin' Majesty. What's the gaime, any'ow? What are you sneakin' away for? Been stealin' a bit, I s'pose. (*He taps her bundle with his riding whip significantly*).

WOMAN. (*shaking her head vehemently*) No, me no steal.

SMITHERS. Bloody liar! But tell me what's up. There's somethin' funny goin' on. I smelled it in the air first thing I got up this mornin'. You blacks are up to some devilment. This palace of 'is is like a bleedin' tomb. Where's all the 'ands? (*The woman keeps sullenly silent.* SMITHERS *raises his whip threateningly*) Ow, yer won't, won't yer? I'll show yer what's what.

WOMAN. (*coweringly*) I tell, Mister. You no hit. They go—all go. (*She makes a sweeping gesture toward the hills in the distance*).

SMITHERS. Run away—to the 'ills?

WOMAN. Yes, Mister. Him Emperor—Great Father. (*She touches her forehead to the floor with a quick mechanical jerk*) Him sleep after eat. Then they go—all go. Me old woman. Me left only. Now me go too.

SMITHERS. (*his astonishment giving way to an immense, mean satisfaction*) Ow! So that's the tieket! Well, I know bloody well wot's in the air—when they runs orf to the 'ills. The tom-tom 'll be thumping out there bloomin' soon. (*With extreme vindictiveness*) And I'm bloody glad of it, for one! Serve 'im right! Puttin' on airs, the stinkin' nigger! 'Is Majesty! Gawd blimey! I only 'opes I'm there when they takes 'im out to shoot 'im. (*Suddenly*) 'E's still 'ere all right, ain't 'e?

WOMAN. Him sleep.

SMITHERS. 'E's bound to find out soon as 'e wakes up. 'E's cunnin' enough to know when 'is time's come. (*He goes to the doorway on right and whistles shrilly with his fingers in his mouth. The old woman springs to her feet and runs out of the doorway, rear.* SMITHERS *goes after her, reaching for his revolver*) Stop or I'll shoot! (*Then stopping—indifferently*) Pop orf then, if yer like, yer black cow. (*He stands in the doorway, looking after her*).

(JONES *enters from the right. He is a tall, powerfully-built, full-blooded negro of middle age. His features are typically negroid, yet there is something decidedly distinctive about his face—an underlying strength of will, a hardy, self-reliant confidence in himself that inspires respect. His eyes are alive with a keen, cunning intelligence. In manner he is shrewd, suspicious, evasive. He wears a light blue uniform coat, sprayed with brass buttons, heavy gold chevrons on his shoulders, gold braid on the collar, cuffs, etc. His pants are bright red with a light blue stripe down the side. Patent leather laced boots with brass spurs, and a belt with a long-barreled, pearl-handled revolver in a holster complete his make up. Yet there is something not altogether ridiculous about his grandeur. He has a way of carrying it off*).

JONES. (*not seeing anyone—greatly irritated and blinking sleepily—shouts*) Who dare whistle dat way in my palace? Who dare wake up de Emperor? I'll git de hide frayled off some o' you niggers sho'!

SMITHERS. (*showing himself—in a manner half-afraid and half-defiant*) It was me whistled to yer. (*As* JONES *frowns angrily*) I got news for yer.

JONES. (*putting on his suavest manner, which fails to cover*

up his contempt for the white man) Oh, it's you, Mister Smithers. (*He sits down on his throne with easy dignity*) What news you got to tell me?

SMITHERS. (*coming close to enjoy his discomfiture*) Don't yer notice nothin' funny today?

JONES. (*coldly*) Funny? No. I ain't perceived nothin' of de kind!

SMITHERS. Then yer ain't so foxy as I thought yer was. Where's all your court? (*sarcastically*) the Generals and the Cabinet Ministers and all?

JONES. (*imperturbably*) Where dey mostly runs to minute I closes my eyes—drinkin' rum and talkin' big down in de town. (*Sarcastically*) How come you don't know dat? Ain't you sousin' with 'em most every day?

SMITHERS. (*stung but pretending indifference—with a wink*) That's part of the day's work. I got ter—ain't I—in my business?

JONES. (*contemptuously*) Yo' business!

SMITHERS. (*imprudently enraged*) Gawd blimey, you was glad enough for me ter take yer in on it when you landed here first. You didn' 'ave no 'igh and mighty airs in them days!

JONES. (*his hand going to his revolver like a flash—menacingly*) Talk polite, white man! Talk polite, you heah me! I'm boss heah now, is you fergettin'? (*The Cockney seems about to challenge this last statement with the facts but something in the other's eyes holds and cows him*).

SMITHERS. (*in a cowardly whine*) No 'arm meant, old top.

JONES. (*condescendingly*) I accepts yo' apology. (*Lets his hand fall from his revolver*) No use'n you rakin' up ole times. What I was den is one thing. What I is now 's another.

You didn't let me in on yo' crooked work out o' no kind feelin's dat time. I done de dirty work fo' you—and most o' de brain work, too, fo' dat matter—and I was wu'th money to you, dat's de reason.

SMITHERS. Well, blimey, I give yer a start, didn't I?—when no one else would. I wasn't afraid to 'ire you like the rest was—'count of the story about your breakin' jail back in the States.

JONES. No, you didn't have no s'cuse to look down on me fo' dat. You been in jail you'self more'n once.

SMITHERS. (*furiously*) It's a lie! (*Then trying to pass it off by an attempt at scorn*) Garn! Who told yer that fairy tale?

JONES. Dey's some tings I ain't got to be tole. I kin see 'em in folk's eyes. (*Then after a pause—meditatively*) Yes, you sho' give me a start. And it didn't take long from dat time to git dese fool, woods' niggers right where I wanted dem. (*With pride*) From stowaway to Emperor in two years! Dat's goin' some!

SMITHERS. (*with curiosity*) And I bet you got yer pile o' money 'id safe some place.

JONES. (*with satisfaction*) I sho' has! And it's in a foreign bank where no pusson don't ever git it out but me no matter what come. You didn't s'pose I was holdin' down dis Emperor job for de glory in it, did you? Sho'! De fuss and glory part of it, dat's only to turn de heads o' de low-flung, bush niggers dat's here. Dey wants de big circus show for deir money. I gives it to 'em an' I gits de money. (*With a grin*) De long green, dat's me every time! (*Then rebukingly*) But you ain't got no kick agin me, Smithers. I'se paid you back all you done for me many times. Ain't I pertected you and

winked at all de crooked tradin' you been doin' right out in de broad day? Sho' I has—and me makin' laws to stop it at de same time! (*He chuckles*).

SMITHERS. (*grinning*) But, meanin' no 'arm, you been grabbin' right and left yourself, ain't yer? Look at the taxes you've put on 'em! Blimey! You've squeezed 'em dry!

JONES. (*chuckling*) No, dey ain't *all* dry yet. I'se still heah, ain't I?

SMITHERS. (*smiling at his secret thought*) They're dry right now, you'll find out. (*Changing the subject abruptly*) And as for me breakin' laws, you've broke 'em all yerself just as fast as yer made 'em.

JONES. Ain't I de Emperor? De laws don't go for him. (*Judicially*) You heah what I tells you, Smithers. Dere's little stealin' like you does, and dere's big stealin' like I does. For de little stealin' dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin' dey makes you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' Fame when you croaks. (*Reminiscently*) If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same fact. And when I gits a chance to use it I winds up Emperor in two years.

SMITHERS. (*unable to repress the genuine admiration of the small fry for the large*) Yes, yer turned the bleedin' trick, all right. Blimey, I never seen a bloke 'as 'ad the bloomin' luck you 'as.

JONES. (*severely*) Luck? What you mean—luck?

SMITHERS. I suppose you'll say as that swank about the silver bullet ain't luck—and that was what first got the fool blacks on yer side the time of the revolution, wasn't it?

JONES. (*with a laugh*) Oh, dat silver bullet! Sho' was

luck! But I makes dat luck, you heah? I loads de dice! Yessuh! When dat murderin' nigger ole Lem hired to kill me takes aim ten feet away and his gun misses fire and I shoots him dead, what you heah me say?

SMITHERS. You said yer'd got a charm so's no lead bullet'd kill yer. You was so strong only a silver bullet could kill yer, you told 'em. Blimey, wasn't that swank for yer—and plain, fat-'eaded luck?

JONES. (*proudly*) I got brains and I uses 'em quick. Dat ain't luck.

SMITHERS. Yer know they wasn't 'ardly liable to get no silver bullets. And it was luck 'e didn't 'it you that time.

JONES. (*laughing*). And dere all dem fool bush niggers was kneelin' down and bumpin' deir heads on de ground like I was a miracle out o' de Bible. Oh Lawd, from dat time on I has dem all eatin' out of my hand. I cracks de whip and dey jumps through.

SMITHERS. (*with a sniff*) Yankee bluff done it.

JONES. Ain't a man's talkin' big what makes him big—long as he makes folks believe it? Sho', I talks large when I ain't got nothin' to back it up, but I ain't talkin' wild just de same. I knows I kin fool 'em—I *knows* it—and dat's backin' enough fo' my game. And ain't I got to learn deir lingo and teach some of dem English befo' I kin talk to 'em? Ain't dat wuk? You ain't never learned ary word er it, Smithers, in de ten years you been heah, dough you knows it's money in you' pocket tradin' wid 'em if you does. But you'se too shiftless to take de trouble.

SMITHERS. (*flushing*) Never mind about me. What's this I've 'eard about yer really 'avin' a silver bullet moulded for yourself?

JONES. It's playin' out my bluff. I has de silver bullet moulded and I tells 'em when de time comes I kills myself wid it. I tells 'em dat's 'cause I'm de on'y man in de world big enuff to git me. No use'n deir tryin'. And dey falls down and bumps deir heads. (*He laughs*) I does dat so's I kin take a walk in peace widout no jealous nigger gunnin' at me from behind de trees.

SMITHERS. (*astonished*) Then you 'ad it made—'onest?

JONES. Sho' did. Heah she be. (*He takes out his revolver, breaks it, and takes the silver bullet out of one chamber*) Five lead an' dis silver baby at de last. Don't she shine pretty? (*He holds it in his hand, looking at it admiringly, as if strangely fascinated*).

SMITHERS. Let me see. (*Reaches out his hand for it*).

JONES. (*harshly*) Keep yo' hands whar dey b'long, white man. (*He replaces it in the chamber and puts the revolver back on his hip*).

SMITHERS. (*snarling*) Gawd blimey! Think I'm a bleedin' thief, you would.

JONES. No, 'tain't dat. I knows you'se scared to steal from me. On'y I ain't 'lowin' nary body to touch dis baby. She's my rabbit's foot.

SMITHERS. (*sneering*) A bloomin' charm, wot? (*Venomously*) Well, you'll need all the bloody charms you 'as before long, s' 'elp me!

JONES. (*judicially*) Oh, I'se good for six months yit 'fore dey gits sick o' my game. Den, when I sees trouble comin', I makes my getaway.

SMITHERS. Ho! You got it all planned, ain't yer?

JONES. I ain't no fool. I knows dis Emperor's time is sho't.

Dat why I make hay when de sun shine. Was you thinkin' I'se aimin' to hold down dis job for life? No, suh! What good is gittin' money if you stays back in dis raggedy country? I wants action when I spends. And when I sees dese niggers gittin' up deir nerve to tu'n me out, and I'se got all de money in sight, I resigns on de spot and beats it quick.

SMITHERS. Where to?

JONES. None o' yo' business.

SMITHERS. Not back to the bloody States, I'll lay my oath.

JONES. (*suspiciously*) Why don't I? (*Then with an easy laugh*) You mean 'count of dat story 'bout me breakin' from jail back dere? Dat's all talk.

SMITHERS. (*skeptically*) Ho, yes!

JONES. (*sharply*) You ain't 'sinuatin' I'se a liar, is you?

SMITHERS. (*hastily*) No, Gawd strike me! I was only thinkin' o' the bloody lies you told the blacks 'ere about killin' white men in the States.

JONES. (*angered*) How come dey're lies?

SMITHERS. You'd 'ave been in jail if you 'ad, wouldn't yer then? (*With venom*) And from what I've 'eard, it ain't 'ealthy for a black to kill a white man in the States. They burns 'em in oil, don't they?

JONES. (*with cool deadliness*) You mean lynchin' 'd scare me? Well, I tells you, Smithers, maybe I does kill one white man back dere. Maybe I does. And maybe I kills another right heah 'fore long if he don't look out.

SMITHERS. (*trying to force a laugh*) I was on'y spoofin' yer. Can't yer take a joke? And you was just sayin' you'd never been in jail.

JONES. (*in the same tone—slightly boastful*) Maybe I goes

to jail dere for gettin' in an argument wid razors ovah a crap game. Maybe I gits twenty years when dat colored man die. Maybe I gits in 'nother argument wid de prison guard was overseer ovah us when we're wukin' de road. Maybe he hits me wid a whip and I splits his head wid a shovel and runs away and files de chain off my leg and gits away safe. Maybe I does all dat an' maybe I don't. It's a story I tells you so's you knows I'se de kind of man dat if you evah repeats one word of it, I ends yo' stealin' on dis yearth mighty damn quick!

SMITHERS. (*terrified*) Think I'd peach on yer? Not me! Ain't I always been yer friend?

JONES. (*suddenly relaxing*) Sho' you has—and you better be.

SMITHERS. (*recovering his composure—and with it his malice*) And just to show yer I'm yer friend, I'll tell yer that bit o' news I was goin' to.

JONES. Go ahead! Shoot de piece. Must be bad news from de happy way you look.

SMITHERS. (*warningly*) Maybe it's gettin' time for you to resign—with that bloomin' silver bullet, wot? (*He finishes with a mocking grin*).

JONES. (*puzzled*) What's dat you say? Talk plain.

SMITHERS. Ain't noticed any of the guards or servants about the place today, I 'aven't.

JONES. (*carelessly*) Dey're all out in de garden sleepin' under de trees. When I sleeps, dey sneaks a sleep, too, and I pretends I never suspicions it. All I got to do is to ring de bell and dey come flyin', makin' a bluff dey was wukin' all de time.

SMITHERS. (*in the same mocking tone*) Ring the bell now an' you'll bloody well see what I means.

JONES. (*startled to alertness, but preserving the same careless tone*) Sho' I rings. (*He reaches below the throne and pulls out a big, common dinner bell which is painted the same vivid scarlet as the throne. He rings this vigorously—then stops to listen. Then he goes to both doors, rings again, and looks out*).

SMITHERS. (*watching him with malicious satisfaction, after a pause—mockingly*) The bloody ship is sinkin' an' the bleedin' rats 'as slung their 'ooks.

JONES. (*in a sudden fit of anger flings the bell clattering into a corner*) Low-flung, woods' niggers! (*Then catching* SMITHERS' *eye on him, he controls himself and suddenly bursts into a low chuckling laugh*) Reckon I overplays my hand dis once! A man can't take de pot on a bob-tailed flush all de time. Was I sayin' I'd sit in six months mo'? Well, I'se changed my mind den. I cashes in and resigns de job of Emperor right dis minute.

SMITHERS. (*with real admiration*) Blimey, but you're a cool bird, and no mistake.

JONES. No use'n fussin'. When I knows de game's up I kisses it good-by widout no long waits. Dey've all run off to de hills, ain't dey?

SMITHERS. Yes—every bleedin' man jack of 'em.

JONES. Den de revolution is at de post. And de Emperor better git his feet smokin' up de trail. (*He starts for the door in rear*).

SMITHERS. Goin' out to look for your 'orse? Yer won't find any. They steals the 'orses first thing. Mine was gone when I

went for 'im this mornin'. That's wot first give me a suspicion of wot was up.

JONES. (*alarmed for a second, scratches his head, then philosophically*) Well, den I hoofs it. Feet, do yo' duty! (*He pulls out a gold watch and looks at it*) Three-thuty. Sundown's at six-thuty or dereabouts. (*Puts his watch back—with cool confidence*) I got plenty o' time to make it easy.

SMITHERS. Don't be so bloomin' sure of it. They'll be after you 'ot and 'eavy. Ole Lem is at the bottom o' this business an' 'e 'ates you like 'ell. 'E'd rather do for you than eat 'is dinner, 'e would!

JONES. (*scornfully*) Dat fool no-count nigger! Does you think I'se scared o' him? I stands him on his thick head more'n once befo' dis, and I does it again if he comes in my way—— (*Fiercely*) And dis time I leave him a dead nigger fo' sho'!

SMITHERS. You'll 'ave to cut through the big forest—an' these blacks 'ere can sniff and follow a trail in the dark like 'ounds. You'd 'ave to 'ustle to get through that forest in twelve hours even if you knew all the bloomin' trails like a native.

JONES. (*with indignant scorn*) Look-a-heah, white man! Does you think I'se a natural bo'n fool? Give me credit fo' havin' some sense, fo' Lawd's sake! Don't you s'pose I'se looked ahead and made sho' of all de chances? I'se gone out in dat big forest, pretendin' to hunt, so many times dat I knows it high an' low like a book. I could go through on dem trails wid my eyes shut. (*With great contempt*) Think dese ign'rent bush niggers dat ain't got brains enuff to know deir own names even can catch Brutus Jones? Huh, I s'pects not! Not on yo' life! Why, man, de white men went after me wid bloodhounds where I come from an' I jes' laughs at 'em. It's a shame to

fool dese black trash around heah, dey're so easy. You watch me, man. I'll make dem look sick, I will. I'll be 'cross de plain to de edge of de forest by time dark comes. Once in de woods in de night, dey got a swell chance o' findin' dis baby! Dawn tomorrow I'll be out at de oder side and on de coast whar dat French gunboat is stayin'. She picks me up, takes me to Martinique when she go dar, and dere I is safe wid a mighty big bankroll in my jeans. It's easy as rollin' off a log.

SMITHERS. (*maliciously*) But s'posin' somethin' 'appens wrong 'an they do nab yer?

JONES. (*decisively*) Dey don't—dat's de answer.

SMITHERS. But, just for argyment's sake—what'd you do?

JONES. (*frowning*) I'se got five lead bullets in dis gun good enuff fo' common bush niggers—and after dat I got de silver bullet left to cheat 'em out o' gittin' me.

SMITHERS. (*jeeringly*) Ho, I was fergettin' that silver bullet. You'll bump yourself orf in style, won't yer? Blimey!

JONES. (*gloomily*) You kin bet yo' whole roll on one thing, white man. Dis baby plays out his string to de end and when he quits, he quits wid a bang de way he ought. Silver bullet ain't none too good for him when he go, dat's a fac'! (*Then shaking off his nervousness—with a confident laugh*) Sho'! What is I talkin' about? Ain't come to dat yit and I never will—not wid trash niggers like dese yere. (*Boastfully*) Silver bullet bring me luck anyway. I kin outguess, outrun, outfight, an' outplay de whole lot o' dem all ovah de board any time o' de day er night! You watch me! (*From the distant hills comes the faint, steady thump of a tom-tom, low and vibrating. It starts at a rate exactly corresponding to normal pulse beat—*

72 to the minute—and continues at a gradually accelerating rate from this point uninterruptedly to the very end of the play).

(JONES *starts at the sound. A strange look of apprehension creeps into his face for a moment as he listens. Then he asks, with an attempt to regain his most casual manner*) What's dat drum beatin' fo'?

SMITHERS. (*with a mean grin*) For you. That means the bleedin' ceremony 'as started. I've 'eard it before and I knows.

JONES. Cer'mony? What cer'mony?

SMITHERS. The blacks is 'oldin' a bloody meetin', 'avin' a war dance, gettin' their courage worked up b'fore they starts after you.

JONES. Let dem! Dey'll sho' need it!

SMITHERS. And they're there 'oldin' their 'eathen religious service—makin' no end of devil spells and charms to 'elp 'em against your silver bullet. (*He guffaws loudly*) Blimey, but they're balmy as 'ell!

JONES. (*a tiny bit awed and shaken in spite of himself*) Huh! Takes more'n dat to scare dis chicken!

SMITHERS. (*scenting the other's feeling—maliciously*) Ternight when it's pitch black in the forest, they'll 'ave their pet devils and ghosts 'oundin' after you. You'll find yer bloody 'air 'll be standin' on end before termorrow mornin'. (*Seriously*) It's a bleedin' queer place, that stinkin' forest, even in daylight. Yer don't know what might 'appen in there, it's that rotten still. Always sends the cold shivers down my back minute I gets in it.

JONES. (*with a contemptuous sniff*) I ain't no chicken-liver like you is. Trees an' me, we'se friends, and dar's a full moon comin' bring me light. And let dem po' niggers make all de

fool spells dey'se a min' to. Does yo' s'pect I'se silly enuff to b'lieve in ghosts an' ha'nts an' all dat ole woman's talk? G'long, white man! You ain't talkin' to me. (*With a chuckle*) Doesn't you know dey's got to do wid a man was member in good standin' o' de Baptist Church? Sho' I was dat when I was porter on de Pullmans, befo' I gits into my little trouble. Let dem try deir heathen tricks. De Baptist Church done pertect me and land dem all in hell. (*Then with more confident satisfaction*) And I'se got little silver bullet o' my own, don't forgit!

SMITHERS. Ho! You 'aven't give much 'eed to your Baptist Church since you been down 'ere. I've 'eard myself you 'ad turned yer coat an' was takin' up with their blarsted witch-doctors, or whatever the 'ell yer calls the swine.

JONES. (*vehemently*) I pretends to! Sho' I pretends! Dat's part o' my game from de fust. If I finds out dem niggers believes dat black is white, den I yells it out louder 'n deir loudest. It don't git me nothin' to do missionary work for de Baptist Church. I'se after de coin, an' I lays my Jesus on de shelf for de time bein'. (*Stops abruptly to look at his watch—alertly*) But I ain't got de time to waste on no more fool talk wid you. I'se gwine away from heah dis secon'. (*He reaches in under the throne and pulls out an expensive Panama hat with a bright multi-colored band and sets it jauntily on his head*) So long, white man! (*With a grin*) See you in jail sometime, maybe!

SMITHERS. Not me, you won't. Well, I wouldn't be in yer bloody boots for no bloomin' money, but 'ere's wishin' yer luck just the same.

JONES. (*contemptuously*) You're de frightenedest man evah

I see! I tells you I'se safe's 'f I was in New York City. It takes dem niggers from now to dark to git up de nerve to start somethin'. By dat time, I'se got a head start dey never kotch up wid.

SMITHERS. (*maliciously*) Give my regards to any ghosts yer meets up with.

JONES. (*grinning*) If dat ghost got money, I'll tell him never ha'nt you less'n he wants to lose it.

SMITHERS. (*flattered*) Garn! (*Then curiously*) Ain't yer takin' no luggage with yer?

JONES. I travels light when I wants to move fast. And I got tinned grub buried on de edge o' de forest. (*Boastfully*) Now say dat I don't look ahead an' use my brains! (*With a wide, liberal gesture*) I will all dat's left in de palace to you—and you better grab all you kin sneak away wid befo' dey gits here.

SMITHERS. (*gratefully*) Righto—and thanks ter yer. (*As* JONES *walks toward the door in rear—cautioningly*) Say! Look 'ere, you ain't goin' out that way, are yer?

JONES. Does you think I'd slink out de back door like a common nigger? I'se Emperor yit, ain't I? And de Emperor Jones leaves de way he comes, and dat black trash don't dare stop him—not yit, leastways. (*He stops for a moment in the doorway, listening to the far-off but insistent beat of the tom-tom*) Listen to dat roll-call, will you? Must be mighty big drum carry dat far. (*Then with a laugh*) Well, if dey ain't no whole brass band to see me off, I sho' got de drum part of it. So long, white man. (*He puts his hands in his pockets and with studied carelessness, whistling a tune, he saunters out of the doorway and off to the left*).

SMITHERS. (*looks after him with a puzzled admiration*) 'E's got 'is bloomin' nerve with 'im, s'elp me! (*Then angrily*) Ho—the bleedin' nigger—puttin' on 'is bloody airs! I 'opes they nabs 'im an' gives 'im what's what!

(*Curtain*)

SCENE TWO

The end of the plain where the Great Forest begins. The foreground is sandy, level ground dotted by a few stones and clumps of stunted bushes cowering close against the earth to escape the buffeting of the trade wind. In the rear the forest is a wall of darkness dividing the world. Only when the eye becomes accustomed to the gloom can the outlines of separate trunks of the nearest trees be made out, enormous pillars of deeper blackness. A somber monotone of wind lost in the leaves moans in the air. Yet this sound serves but to intensify the impression of the forest's relentless immobility, to form a background throwing into relief its brooding, implacable silence.

(JONES *enters from the left, walking rapidly. He stops as he nears the edge of the forest, looks around him quickly, peering into the dark as if searching for some familiar landmark. Then, apparently satisfied that he is where he ought to be, he throws himself on the ground, dog-tired*).

Well, heah I is. In de nick o' time, too! Little mo' an' it'd be blacker'n de ace of spades heahabouts. (*He pulls a bandana handkerchief from his hip pocket and mops off his perspiring* face) Sho'! Gimme air! I'se tuckered out sho' 'nuff. Dat soft Emperor job ain't no trainin' fo' a long hike ovah dat plain in de brilin' sun. (*Then with a chuckle*) Cheer up, nigger, de worst is yet to come. (*He lifts his head and stares at the forest. His chuckle peters out abruptly. In a tone of awe*) My goodness,

look at dem woods, will you? Dat no-count Smithers said dey'd be black an' he sho' called de turn. (*Turning away from them quickly and looking down at his feet, he snatches at a chance to change the subject—solicitously*) Feet, you is holdin' up yo' end fine an' I sutinly hopes you ain't blisterin' none. It's time you git a rest. (*He takes off his shoes, his eyes studiously avoiding the forest. He feels of the soles of his feet gingerly*) You is still in de pink—on'y a little mite feverish. Cool yo'selfs. Remember you done got a long journey yit befo' you. (*He sits in a weary attitude, listening to the rhythmic beating of the tom-tom. He grumbles in a loud tone to cover up a growing uneasiness*) Bush niggers! Wonder dey wouldn't git sick o' beatin' dat drum. Sound louder, seem like. I wonder if dey's startin' after me? (*He scrambles to his feet, looking back across the plain*) Couldn't see dem now, nohow, if dey was hundred feet away. (*Then shaking himself like a wet dog to get rid of these depressing thoughts*) Sho', dey's miles an' miles behind. What you gittin' fidgety about? (*But he sits down and begins to lace up his shoes in great haste, all the time muttering reassuringly*) You know what? Yo' belly is empty, dat's what's de matter wid you. Come time to eat! Wid nothin' but wind on yo' stumach, o' course you feels jiggedy. Well, we eats right heah an' now soon's I gits dese pesky shoes laced up. (*He finishes lacing up his shoes*) Dere! Now le's see! (*Gets on his hands and knees and searches the ground around him with his eyes*) White stone, white stone, where is you? (*He sees the first white stone and crawls to it—with satisfaction*) Heah you is! I knowed dis was de right place. Box of grub, come to me. (*He turns over the stone and feels in under it—in a tone of dismay*) Ain't heah! Gorry, is I in de right place or isn't

I? Dere's 'nother stone. Guess dat's it. (*He scrambles to the next stone and turns it over*) Ain't heah, neither! Grub, whar is you? Ain't heah. Gorry, has I got to go hungry into dem woods—all de night? (*While he is talking he scrambles from one stone to another, turning them over in frantic haste. Finally, he jumps to his feet excitedly*) Is I lost de place? Must have! But how dat happen when I was followin' de trail across de plain in broad daylight? (*Almost plaintively*) I'se hungry, I is! I gotta git my feed. Whar's my strength gonna come from if I doesn't? Gorry, I gotta find dat grub high an' low somehow! Why it come dark so quick like dat? Can't see nothin'. (*He scratches a match on his trousers and peers about him. The rate of the beat of the far-off tom-tom increases perceptibly as he does so. He mutters in a bewildered voice*) How come all dese white stones come heah when I only remembers one? (*Suddenly, with a frightened gasp, he flings the match on the ground and stamps on it*) Nigger, is you gone crazy mad? Is you lightin' matches to show dem whar you is? Fo' Lawd's sake, use yo' haid. Gorry, I'se got to be careful! (*He stares at the plain behind him apprehensively, his hand on his revolver*) But how come all dese white stones? And whar's dat tin box o' grub I hid all wrapped up in oilcloth?

(*While his back is turned, the* LITTLE FORMLESS FEARS *creep out from the deeper blackness of the forest. They are black, shapeless, only their glittering little eyes can be seen. If they have any describable form at all it is that of a grubworm about the size of a creeping child. They move noiselessly, but with deliberate, painful effort, striving to raise themselves on end, failing and sinking prone again.* JONES *turns about to face*

the forest. He stares up at the tops of the trees, seeking vainly to discover his whereabouts by their conformation).

Can't tell nothin' from dem trees! Gorry, nothin' 'round heah looks like I evah seed it befo'. I'se done lost de place sho' 'nuff! (*With mournful foreboding*) It's mighty queer! It's mighty queer! (*With sudden forced defiance—in an angry tone*) Woods, is you tryin' to put somethin' ovah on me?

(*From the formless creatures on the ground in front of him comes a tiny gale of low mocking laughter like a rustling of leaves. They squirm upward toward him in twisted attitudes.* JONES *looks down, leaps backward with a yell of terror, yanking out his revolver as he does so—in a quavering voice*) What's dat? Who's dar? What is you? Git away from me befo' I shoots you up! You don't?——

(*He fires. There is a flash, a loud report, then silence broken only by the far-off, quickened throb of the tom-tom. The formless creatures have scurried back into the forest.* JONES *remains fixed in his position, listening intently. The sound of the shot, the reassuring feel of the revolver in his hand, have somewhat restored his shaken nerve. He addresses himself with renewed confidence*).

Dey're gone. Dat shot fix 'em. Dey was only little animals —little wild pigs, I reckon. Dey've maybe rooted out yo' grub an' eat it. Sho', you fool nigger, what you think dey is—ha'nts? (*Excitedly*) Gorry, you give de game away when you fire dat shot. Dem niggers heah dat fo' su'tin! Time you beat it in de woods widout no long waits. (*He starts for the forest—hesitates before the plunge—then urging himself in with manful resolution*) Git in, nigger! What you skeered at? Ain't nothin' dere but de trees! Git in! (*He plunges boldly into the forest*).

SCENE THREE

In the forest. The moon has just risen. Its beams, drifting through the canopy of leaves, make a barely perceptible, suffused, eerie glow. A dense low wall of underbrush and creepers is in the nearer foreground, fencing in a small triangular clearing. Beyond this is the massed blackness of the forest like an encompassing barrier. A path is dimly discerned leading down to the clearing from left, rear, and winding away from it again toward the right. As the scene opens nothing can be distinctly made out. Except for the beating of the tom-tom, which is a trifle louder and quicker than at the close of the previous scene, there is silence, broken every few seconds by a queer, clicking sound. Then gradually the figure of the negro, JEFF, *can be discerned crouching on his haunches at the rear of the triangle. He is middle-aged, thin, brown in color, is dressed in a Pullman porter's uniform and cap. He is throwing a pair of dice on the ground before him, picking them up, shaking them, casting them out with the regular, rigid, mechanical movements of an automaton. The heavy, plodding footsteps of someone approaching along the trail from the left are heard and* JONES' *voice, pitched on a slightly higher key and strained in a cheery effort to overcome its own tremors.*

De moon's rizen. Does you heah dat, nigger? You gits more light from dis out. No mo' buttin' yo' fool head agin' de trunks an' scratchin' de hide off yo' legs in de bushes. Now

you sees whar yo'se gwine. So cheer up! From now on you has a snap. (*He steps just to the rear of the triangular clearing and mops off his face on his sleeve. He has lost his Panama hat. His face is scratched, his brilliant uniform shows several large rents*) What time's it gittin' to be, I wonder? I dassent light no match to find out. Phoo'. It's wa'm an' dat's a fac'! (*Wearily*) How long I been makin' tracks in dese woods? Must be hours an' hours. Seems like fo'evah! Yit can't be, when de moon's jes' riz. Dis am a long night fo' yo', yo' Majesty! (*With a mournful chuckle*) Majesty! Der ain't much majesty 'bout dis baby now. (*With attempted cheerfulness*) Never min'. It's all part o' de game. Dis night come to an end like everything else. And when you gits dar safe and has dat bankroll in yo' hands you laughs at all dis. (*He starts to whistle but checks himself abruptly*) What yo' whistlin' for, you po' dope! Want all de worl' to heah you? (*He stops talking to listen*) Heah dat ole drum! Sho' gits nearer from de sound. Dey's packin' it along wid 'em. Time fo' me to move. (*He takes a step forward, then stops—worriedly*) What's dat odder queer clickety sound I heah? Dere it is! Sound close! Sound like—sound like—Fo' God sake, sound like some nigger was shootin' crap! (*Frightenedly*) I better beat it quick when I gits dem notions. (*He walks quickly into the clear space—then stands transfixed as he sees* JEFF—*in a terrified gasp*) Who dar? Who dat? Is dat you, Jeff? (*Starting toward the other, forgetful for a moment of his surroundings and really believing it is a living man that he sees—in a tone of happy relief*) Jeff! I'se sho' mighty glad to see you! Dey tol' me you done died from dat razor cut I gives you. (*Stopping suddenly, bewilderedly*) But how you come to be heah, nigger? (*He stares fascinatedly at the other*

who continues his mechanical play with the dice. JONES' *eyes begin to roll wildly. He stutters*) Ain't you gwine—look up —can't you speak to me? Is you—is you—a ha'nt? (*He jerks out his revolver in a frenzy of terrified rage*) Nigger, I kills you dead once. Has I got to kill you ag'in? You take it den. (*He fires. When the smoke clears away* JEFF *has disappeared.* JONES *stands trembling—then with a certain reassurance*) He's gone, anyway. Ha'nt or not ha'nt, dat shot fix him. (*The beat of the far-off tom-tom is perceptibly louder and more rapid.* JONES *becomes conscious of it—with a start, looking back over his shoulder*) Dey's gittin' near! Dey's comin' fast! And heah I is shootin' shots to let 'em know jes' whar I is! Oh, Gorry, I'se got to run. (*Forgetting the path he plunges wildly into the underbrush in the rear and disappears in the shadow*).

SCENE FOUR

In the forest. A wide dirt road runs diagonally from right, front, to left, rear. Rising sheer on both sides the forest walls it in. The moon is now up. Under its light the road glimmers ghastly and unreal. It is as if the forest had stood aside momentarily to let the road pass through and accomplish its veiled purpose. This done, the forest will fold in upon itself again and the road will be no more. JONES *stumbles in from the forest on the right. His uniform is ragged and torn. He looks about him with numbed surprise when he sees the road, his eyes blinking in the bright moonlight. He flops down exhaustedly and pants heavily for a while. Then with sudden anger.*

I'm meltin' wid heat! Runnin' an' runnin' an' runnin'! Damn dis heah coat! Like a straitjacket! (*He tears off his coat and flings it away from him, revealing himself stripped to the waist*) Dere! Dat's better! Now I kin breathe! (*Looking down at his feet, the spurs catch his eye*) And to hell wid dese high-fangled spurs. Dey're what's been a-trippin' me up an' breakin' my neck. (*He unstraps them and flings them away disgustedly*) Dere! I gits rid o' dem frippety Emperor trappin's an' I travels lighter. Lawd! I'se tired! (*After a pause, listening to the insistent beat of the tom-tom in the distance*) I must 'a' put some distance between myself an' dem—runnin' like dat—and yit—dat damn drum sounds jes' de same—nearer, even. Well, I guess I a'most holds my lead anyhow. Dey won't never catch

up. (*With a sigh*) If on'y my fool legs stands up. Oh, I'se sorry I evah went in for dis. Dat Emperor job is sho' hard to shake. (*He looks around him suspiciously*) How'd dis road evah git heah? Good level road, too. I never remembers seein' it befo'. (*Shaking his head apprehensively*) Dese woods is sho' full o' de queerest things at night. (*With a sudden terror*) Lawd God, don't let me see no more o' dem ha'nts! Dey gits my goat! (*Then trying to talk himself into confidence*) Ha'nts! You fool nigger, dey ain't no such things! Don't de Baptist parson tell you dat many time? Is you civilized, or is you like dese ign'rent black niggers heah? Sho'! Dat was all in yo' own head. Wasn't nothin' dere. Wasn't no Jeff! Know what? You jus' get seein' dem things 'cause yo' belly's empty and you's sick wid hunger inside. Hunger 'fects yo' head and yo' eyes. Any fool know dat. (*Then pleading fervently*) But bless God, I don't come across no more o' dem, whatever dey is! (*Then cautiously*) Rest! Don't talk! Rest! You needs it. Den you gits on yo' way again. (*Looking at the moon*) Night's half gone a'most. You hits de coast in de mawning! Den you's all safe.

(*From the right forward a small gang of negroes enter. They are dressed in striped convict suits, their heads are shaven, one leg drags limpingly, shackled to a heavy ball and chain. Some carry picks, the others shovels. They are followed by a white man dressed in the uniform of a prison guard. A Winchester rifle is slung across his shoulders and he carries a heavy whip. At a signal from the* GUARD *they stop on the road opposite where* JONES *is sitting.* JONES, *who has been staring up at the sky, unmindful of their noiseless approach, suddenly looks down and sees them. His eyes pop out, he tries to get to his feet and*

fly, but sinks back, too numbed by fright to move. His voice catches in a choking prayer).

Lawd Jesus!

(*The* PRISON GUARD *cracks his whip—noiselessly—and at that signal all the convicts start to work on the road. They swing their picks, they shovel, but not a sound comes from their labor. Their movements, like those of* JEFF *in the preceding scene, are those of automatons,—rigid, slow, and mechanical. The* PRISON GUARD *points sternly at* JONES *with his whip, motions him to take his place among the other shovelers.* JONES *gets to his feet in a hypnotized stupor. He mumbles subserviently*).

Yes, suh! Yes, suh! I'se comin'.

(*As he shuffles, dragging one foot, over to his place, he curses under his breath with rage and hatred*).

God damn yo' soul, I gits even wid you yit, sometime.

(*As if there were a shovel in his hands he goes through weary, mechanical gestures of digging up dirt, and throwing it to the roadside. Suddenly the* GUARD *approaches him angrily, threateningly. He raises his whip and lashes* JONES *viciously across the shoulders with it.* JONES *winces with pain and cowers abjectly. The* GUARD *turns his back on him and walks away contemptuously. Instantly* JONES *straightens up. With arms upraised as if his shovel were a club in his hands he springs murderously at the unsuspecting* GUARD. *In the act of crashing down his shovel on the white man's skull,* JONES *suddenly becomes aware that his hands are empty. He cries despairingly*).

Whar's my shovel? Gimme my shovel 'til I splits his damn head! (*Appealing to his fellow convicts*) Gimme a shovel, one o' you, fo' God's sake!

(*They stand fixed in motionless attitudes, their eyes on the*

ground. The GUARD *seems to wait expectantly, his back turned to the attacker.* JONES *bellows with baffled, terrified rage, tugging frantically at his revolver*).

I kills you, you white debil, if it's de last thing I evah does! Ghost or debil, I kill you agin!

(*He frees the revolver and fires point blank at the* GUARD'S *back. Instantly the walls of the forest close in from both sides, the road and the figures of the convict gang are blotted out in an enshrouding darkness. The only sounds are a crashing in the underbrush as* JONES *leaps away in mad flight and the throbbing of the tom-tom, still far distant, but increased in volume of sound and rapidity of beat*).

SCENE FIVE

A large circular clearing, enclosed by the serried ranks of gigantic trunks of tall trees whose tops are lost to view. In the center is a big dead stump worn by time into a curious resemblance to an auction block. The moon floods the clearing with a clear light. JONES *forces his way in through the forest on the left. He looks wildly about the clearing with hunted, fearful glances. His pants are in tatters, his shoes cut and misshapen, flapping about his feet. He slinks cautiously to the stump in the center and sits down in a tense position, ready for instant flight. Then he holds his head in his hands and rocks back and forth, moaning to himself miserably*).

Oh Lawd, Lawd! Oh Lawd, Lawd! (*Suddenly he throws himself on his knees and raises his clasped hands to the sky—in a voice of agonized pleading*) Lawd Jesus, heah my prayer! I'se a po' sinner, a po' sinner! I knows I done wrong, I knows it! When I cotches Jeff cheatin' wid loaded dice my anger overcomes me and I kills him dead! Lawd, I done wrong! When dat guard hits me wid de whip, my anger overcomes me, and I kills him dead. Lawd, I done wrong! And down heah whar dese fool bush niggers raises me up to the seat o' de mighty, I steals all I could grab. Lawd, I done wrong! I knows it! I'se sorry! Forgive me, Lawd! Forgive dis po' sinner! (*Then beseeching terrifiedly*) And keep dem away, Lawd! Keep dem away from me! And stop dat drum soundin'

in my ears! Dat begin to sound ha'nted, too. (*He gets to his feet, evidently slightly reassured by his prayer—with attempted confidence*) De Lawd'll preserve me from dem ha'nts after dis. (*Sits down on the stump again*) I ain't skeered o' real men. Let dem come. But dem odders—— (*He shudders—then looks down at his feet, working his toes inside the shoes—with a groan*) Oh, my po' feet! Dem shoes ain't no use no more 'ceptin' to hurt. I'se better off widout dem. (*He unlaces them and pulls them off—holds the wrecks of the shoes in his hands and regards them mournfully*) You was real, A-one patin' leather, too. Look at you now. Emperor, you'se gittin' mighty low!

(*He sighs dejectedly and remains with bowed shoulders, staring down at the shoes in his hands as if reluctant to throw them away. While his attention is thus occupied, a crowd of figures silently enter the clearing from all sides. All are dressed in Southern costumes of the period of the fifties of the last century. There are middle-aged men who are evidently well-to-do planters. There is one spruce, authoritative individual—the* AUCTIONEER. *There is a crowd of curious spectators, chiefly young belles and dandies who have come to the slave-market for diversion. All exchange courtly greetings in dumb show and chat silently together. There is something stiff, rigid, unreal, marionettish about their movements. They group themselves about the stump. Finally a batch of slaves is led in from the left by an attendant—three men of different ages, two women, one with a baby in her arms, nursing. They are placed to the left of the stump, beside* JONES.

The white planters look them over appraisingly as if they were cattle, and exchange judgments on each. The dandies point with their fingers and make witty remarks. The belles

titter bewitchingly. All this in silence save for the ominous throb of the tom-tom. The AUCTIONEER *holds up his hand, taking his place at the stump. The groups strain forward attentively. He touches* JONES *on the shoulder peremptorily, motioning for him to stand on the stump—the auction block.*

JONES *looks up, sees the figures on all sides, looks wildly for some opening to escape, sees none, screams and leaps madly to the top of the stump to get as far away from them as possible. He stands there, cowering, paralyzed with horror. The* AUCTIONEER *begins his silent spiel. He points to* JONES, *appeals to the planters to see for themselves. Here is a good field hand, sound in wind and limb as they can see. Very strong still in spite of his being middle-aged. Look at that back. Look at those shoulders. Look at the muscles in his arms and his sturdy legs. Capable of any amount of hard labor. Moreover, of a good disposition, intelligent and tractable. Will any gentleman start the bidding? The* PLANTERS *raise their fingers, make their bids. They are apparently all eager to possess* JONES. *The bidding is lively, the crowd interested. While this has been going on,* JONES *has been seized by the courage of desperation. He dares to look down and around him. Over his face abject terror gives way to mystification, to gradual realization—stutteringly*).

What you all doin', white folks? What's all dis? What you all lookin' at me fo'? What you doin' wid me, anyhow? (*Suddenly convulsed with raging hatred and fear*) Is dis a auction? Is you sellin' me like dey uster befo' de war? (*Jerking out his revolver just as the* AUCTIONEER *knocks him down to one of the planters—glaring from him to the purchaser*) And *you* sells me? And *you* buys me? I shows you I'se a free nigger, damn

yo' souls! (*He fires at the* AUCTIONEER *and at the* PLANTER *with such rapidity that the two shots are almost simultaneous. As if this were a signal the walls of the forest fold in. Only blackness remains and silence broken by* JONES *as he rushes off, crying with fear—and by the quickened, ever louder beat of the tom-tom*).

SCENE SIX

A cleared space in the forest. The limbs of the trees meet over it forming a low ceiling about five feet from the ground. The interlocked ropes of creepers reaching upward to entwine the tree trunks give an arched appearance to the sides. The space thus enclosed is like the dark, noisome hold of some ancient vessel. The moonlight is almost completely shut out and only a vague wan light filters through. There is the noise of someone approaching from the left, stumbling and crawling through the undergrowth. JONES' *voice is heard between chattering moans.*

Oh, Lawd, what I gwine do now? Ain't got no bullet left on'y de silver one. If mo' o' dem ha'nts come after me, how I gwine skeer dem away? Oh, Lawd, on'y de silver one left—an' I gotta save dat fo' luck. If I shoots dat one I'm a goner sho'! Lawd, it's black heah! Whar's de moon? Oh, Lawd, don't dis night evah come to an end! (*By the sounds, he is feeling his way cautiously forward*) Dere! Dis feels like a clear space. I gotta lie down an' rest. I don't care if dem niggers does cotch me. I gotta rest.

(*He is well forward now where his figure can be dimly made out. His pants have been so torn away that what is left of them is no better than a breech cloth. He flings himself full length, face downward on the ground, panting with exhaustion. Gradually it seems to grow lighter in the enclosed space and two rows of seated figures can be seen behind* JONES. *They are sit-*

ting in crumpled, despairing attitudes, hunched, facing one another with their backs touching the forest walls as if they were shackled to them. All are negroes, naked save for loin cloths. At first they are silent and motionless. Then they begin to sway slowly forward toward each and back again in unison, as if they were laxly letting themselves follow the long roll of a ship at sea. At the same time, a low, melancholy murmur rises among them, increasing gradually by rhythmic degrees which seem to be directed and controlled by the throb of the tom-tom in the distance, to a long, tremulous wail of despair that reaches a certain pitch, unbearably acute, then falls by slow gradations of tone into silence and is taken up again. JONES *starts, looks up, sees the figures, and throws himself down again to shut out the sight. A shudder of terror shakes his whole body as the wail rises up about him again. But the next time, his voice, as if under some uncanny compulsion, starts with the others. As their chorus lifts he rises to a sitting posture similar to the others, swaying back and forth. His voice reaches the highest pitch of sorrow, of desolation. The light fades out, the other voices cease, and only darkness is left.* JONES *can be heard scrambling to his feet and running off, his voice sinking down the scale and receding as he moves farther and farther away in the forest. The tom-tom beats louder, quicker, with a more insistent, triumphant pulsation*).

SCENE SEVEN

The foot of a gigantic tree by the edge of a great river. A rough structure of boulders, like an altar, is by the tree. The raised river bank is in the nearer background. Beyond this the surface of the river spreads out, brilliant and unruffled in the moonlight, blotted out and merged into a veil of bluish mist in the distance. JONES' *voice is heard from the left rising and falling in the long, despairing wail of the chained slaves, to the rhythmic beat of the tom-tom. As his voice sinks into silence, he enters the open space. The expression of his face is fixed and stony, his eyes have an obsessed glare, he moves with a strange deliberation like a sleep-walker or one in a trance. He looks around at the tree, the rough stone altar, the moonlit surface of the river beyond, and passes his hand over his head with a vague gesture of puzzled bewilderment. Then, as if in obedience to some obscure impulse, he sinks into a kneeling, devotional posture before the altar. Then he seems to come to himself partly, to have an uncertain realization of what he is doing, for he straightens up and stares about him horrifiedly—in an incoherent mumble.*

What—what is I doin'? What is—dis place? Seems like I know dat tree—an' dem stones—an' de river. I remember—seems like I been heah befo'. (*Tremblingly*) Oh, Gorry, I'se skeered in dis place! I'se skeered. Oh, Lawd, pertect dis sinner!

(Crawling away from the altar, he cowers close to the ground, his face hidden, his shoulders heaving with sobs of hysterical fright. From behind the trunk of the tree, as if he had sprung out of it, the figure of the CONGO WITCH-DOCTOR *appears. He is wizened and old, naked except for the fur of some small animal tied about his waist, its bushy tail hanging down in front. His body is stained all over a bright red. Antelope horns are on each side of his head, branching upward. In one hand he carries a bone rattle, in the other a charm stick with a bunch of white cockatoo feathers tied to the end. A great number of glass beads and bone ornaments are about his neck, ears, wrists, and ankles. He struts noiselessly with a queer prancing step to a position in the clear ground between* JONES *and the altar. Then with a preliminary, summoning stamp of his foot on the earth, he begins to dance and to chant. As if in response to his summons the beating of the tom-tom grows to a fierce, exultant boom whose throbs seem to fill the air with vibrating rhythm.* JONES *looks up, starts to spring to his feet, reaches a half-kneeling, half-squatting position and remains rigidly fixed there, paralyzed with awed fascination by this new apparition. The* WITCH-DOCTOR *sways, stamping with his foot, his bone rattle clicking the time. His voice rises and falls in a weird, monotonous croon, without articulate word divisions. Gradually his dance becomes clearly one of a narrative in pantomime, his croon is an incantation, a charm to allay the fierceness of some implacable deity demanding sacrifice. He flees, he is pursued by devils, he hides, he flees again. Ever wilder and wilder becomes his flight, nearer and nearer draws the pursuing evil, more and more the spirit of terror gains possession of him. His croon, rising to intensity, is punctuated by shrill cries.* JONES *has*

become completely hypnotized. His voice joins in the incantation, in the cries, he beats time with his hands and sways his body to and fro from the waist. The whole spirit and meaning of the dance has entered into him, has become his spirit. Finally the theme of the pantomime halts on a howl of despair, and is taken up again in a note of savage hope. There is a salvation. The forces of evil demand sacrifice. They must be appeased. The WITCH-DOCTOR *points with his wand to the sacred tree, to the river beyond, to the altar, and finally to* JONES *with a ferocious command.* JONES *seems to sense the meaning of this. It is he who must offer himself for sacrifice. He beats his forehead abjectly to the ground, moaning hysterically*).

Mercy, Oh Lawd! Mercy! Mercy on dis po' sinner.

(*The* WITCH-DOCTOR *springs to the river bank. He stretches out his arms and calls to some God within its depths. Then he starts backward slowly, his arms remaining out. A huge head of a crocodile appears over the bank and its eyes, glittering greenly, fasten upon* JONES. *He stares into them fascinatedly. The* WITCH-DOCTOR *prances up to him, touches him with his wand, motions with hideous command toward the waiting monster.* JONES *squirms on his belly nearer and nearer, moaning continually*).

Mercy, Lawd! Mercy!

(*The crocodile heaves more of his enormous hulk onto the land.* JONES *squirms toward him. The* WITCH-DOCTOR'S *voice shrills out in furious exultation, the tom-tom beats madly.* JONES *cries out in a fierce, exhausted spasm of anguished pleading*).

Lawd, save me! Lawd Jesus, heah my prayer!

(*Immediately, in answer to his prayer, comes the thought of*

the one bullet left him. He snatches at his hip, shouting defiantly).

De silver bullet! You don't git me yit!

(He fires at the green eyes in front of him. The head of the crocodile sinks back behind the river bank, the WITCH-DOCTOR *springs behind the sacred tree and disappears.* JONES *lies with his face to the ground, his arms outstretched, whimpering with fear as the throb of the tom-tom fills the silence about him with a somber pulsation, a baffled but revengeful power).*

SCENE EIGHT

Dawn. Same as Scene Two, the dividing line of forest and plain. The nearest tree trunks are dimly revealed but the forest behind them is still a mass of glooming shadow. The tom-tom seems on the very spot, so loud and continuously vibrating are its beats. LEM *enters from the left, followed by a small squad of his soldiers, and by the Cockney trader,* SMITHERS. LEM *is a heavy-set, ape-faced old savage of the extreme African type, dressed only in a loin cloth. A revolver and cartridge belt are about his waist. His soldiers are in different degrees of rag-concealed nakedness. All wear broad palm-leaf hats. Each one carries a rifle.* SMITHERS *is the same as in Scene One. One of the soldiers, evidently a tracker, is peering about keenly on the ground. He points to the spot where* JONES *entered the forest.* LEM *and* SMITHERS *come to look.*

SMITHERS. (*after a glance, turns away in disgust*) That's where 'e went in right enough. Much good it'll do yer. 'E's miles orf by this an' safe to the Coast, damn 's 'ide! I tole yer yer'd lose 'im, didn't I?—wastin' the 'ole bloomin' night beatin' yer bloody drum and castin' yer silly spells! Gawd blimey, wot a pack!

LEM. (*gutturally*) We cotch him. (*He makes a motion to his soldiers who squat down on their haunches in a semi-circle*).

SMITHERS. (*exasperatedly*) Well, ain't yer goin' in an' 'unt 'im in the woods? What the 'ell's the good of waitin'?

LEM. (*imperturbably—squatting down himself*) We cotch him.

SMITHERS. (*turning away from him contemptuously*) Aw! Garn! 'E's a better man than the lot o' you put together. I 'ates the sight o' 'im but I'll say that for 'im. (*A sound comes from the forest. The soldiers jump to their feet, cocking their rifles alertly.* LEM *remains sitting with an imperturbable expression, but listening intently. He makes a quick signal with his hand. His followers creep quickly into the forest, scattering so that each enters at a different spot*).

SMITHERS. You ain't thinkin' that would be 'im, I 'ope?

LEM. (*calmly*) We cotch him.

SMITHERS. Blarsted fat 'eads! (*Then after a second's thought —wonderingly*) Still an' all, it might 'appen. If 'e lost 'is bloody way in these stinkin' woods 'e'd likely turn in a circle without 'is knowin' it.

LEM. (*peremptorily*) Sssh! (*The reports of several rifles sound from the forest, followed a second later by savage, exultant yells. The beating of the tom-tom abruptly ceases.* LEM *looks up at the white man with a grin of satisfaction*) We cotch him. Him dead.

SMITHERS. (*with a snarl*) 'Ow d'yer know it's 'im an' 'ow d'yer know 'e's dead?

LEM. My mens dey got um silver bullets. Lead bullet no kill him. He got um strong charm. I cook um money, make um silver bullet, make um strong charm, too.

SMITHERS. (*astonished*) So that's wot you was up to all night, wot? You was scared to put after 'im till you'd moulded silver bullets, eh?

LEM. (*simply stating a fact*) Yes. Him got strong charm. Lead no good.

SMITHERS. (*slapping his thigh and guffawing*) Haw-haw! If yer don't beat all 'ell! (*Then recovering himself—scornfully*) I'll bet yer it ain't 'im they shot at all, yer bleedin' looney!

LEM. (*calmly*) Dey come bring him now. (*The soldiers come out of the forest, carrying* JONES' *limp body. He is dead. They carry him to* LEM, *who examines his body with great satisfaction.* SMITHERS *leans over his shoulder—in a tone of frightened awe*) Well, they did for yer right enough, Jonsey, me lad! Dead as a 'erring! (*Mockingly*) Where's yer 'igh an' mighty airs now, yer bloomin' Majesty? (*Then with a grin*) Silver bullets! Gawd blimey, but yer died in the 'eighth o' style, any'ow!

(*Curtain*)

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

A Play in Four Acts

(1920)

CHARACTERS

"Johnny-the-Priest"

Two Longshoremen

A Postman

Larry, *bartender*

Chris. Christopherson, *captain of the barge* Simeon Winthrop

Marthy Owen

Anna Christopherson, *Chris's daughter*

Three men of a steamer's crew

Mat Burke, *a stoker*

Johnson, *deckhand on the barge*

SCENES

ACT I

"Johnny-the-Priest's" saloon near the water front, New York City.

ACT II

The barge, *Simeon Winthrop*, at anchor in the harbor of Provincetown, Mass. Ten days later.

ACT III

Cabin of the barge, at dock in Boston. A week later.

ACT IV

The same. Two days later.

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

ACT ONE

SCENE. "JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST'S" *saloon near South Street, New York City. The stage is divided into two sections, showing a small back room on the right. On the left, forward, of the barroom, a large window looking out on the street. Beyond it, the main entrance—a double swinging door. Farther back, another window. The bar runs from left to right nearly the whole length of the rear wall. In back of the bar, a small showcase displaying a few bottles of case goods, for which there is evidently little call. The remainder of the rear space in front of the large mirrors is occupied by half-barrels of cheap whisky of the "nickel-a-shot" variety, from which the liquor is drawn by means of spigots. On the right is an open doorway leading to the back room. In the back room are four round wooden tables with five chairs grouped about each. In the rear, a family entrance opening on a side street.*

It is late afternoon of a day in fall.

As the curtain rises, JOHNNY *is discovered.* "JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST" *deserves his nickname. With his pale, thin, clean-shaven face, mild blue eyes and white hair, a cassock would seem more suited to him than the apron he wears. Neither his voice nor his general manner dispel this illusion which has made him a personage of the water front. They are soft and bland. But beneath all his mildness one senses the man behind the mask—cynical, callous, hard as nails. He is lounging at ease*

behind the bar, a pair of spectacles on his nose, reading an evening paper.

Two longshoremen enter from the street, wearing their working aprons, the button of the union pinned conspicuously on the caps pulled sideways on their heads at an aggressive angle.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. (*as they range themselves at the bar*) Gimme a shock. Number Two. (*He tosses a coin on the bar*).

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. Same here. (JOHNNY *sets two glasses of barrel whisky before them*).

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. Here's luck! (*The other nods. They gulp down their whisky*).

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. (*putting money on the bar*) Give us another.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. Gimme a scoop this time—lager and porter. I'm dry.

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. Same here. (JOHNNY *draws the lager and porter and sets the big, foaming schooners before them. They drink down half the contents and start to talk together hurriedly in low tones. The door on the left is swung open and* LARRY *enters. He is a boyish, red-cheeked, rather good-looking young fellow of twenty or so*).

LARRY. (*nodding to* JOHNNY—*cheerily*) Hello, boss.

JOHNNY. Hello, Larry. (*With a glance at his watch*) Just on time. (LARRY *goes to the right behind the bar, takes off his coat, and puts on an apron*).

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. (*abruptly*) Let's drink up and get back to it. (*They finish their drinks and go out left.* THE POSTMAN *enters as they leave. He exchanges nods with* JOHNNY *and throws a letter on the bar*).

THE POSTMAN. Addressed care of you, Johnny. Know him?

JOHNNY. (*picks up the letter, adjusting his spectacles.* LARRY *comes and peers over his shoulders.* JOHNNY *reads very slowly*) Christopher Christopherson.

THE POSTMAN. (*helpfully*) Square-head name.

LARRY. Old Chris—that's who.

JOHNNY. Oh, sure. I was forgetting Chris carried a hell of a name like that. Letters come here for him sometimes before, I remember now. Long time ago, though.

THE POSTMAN. It'll get him all right then?

JOHNNY. Sure thing. He comes here whenever he's in port.

THE POSTMAN. (*turning to go*) Sailor, eh?

JOHNNY. (*with a grin*) Captain of a coal barge.

THE POSTMAN. (*laughing*) Some job! Well, s'long.

JOHNNY. S'long. I'll see he gets it. (THE POSTMAN *goes out.* JOHNNY *scrutinizes the letter*) You got good eyes, Larry. Where's it from?

LARRY. (*after a glance*) St. Paul. That'll be in Minnesota, I'm thinkin'. Looks like a woman's writing, too, the old divil!

JOHNNY. He's got a daughter somewheres out West, I think he told me once. (*He puts the letter on the cash register*) Come to think of it, I ain't seen old Chris in a dog's age. (*Putting his overcoat on, he comes around the end of the bar*) Guess I'll be gettin' home. See you tomorrow.

LARRY. Good-night to ye, boss. (*As* JOHNNY *goes toward the street door, it is pushed open and* CHRISTOPHER CHRISTOPHERSON *enters. He is a short, squat, broad-shouldered man of about fifty, with a round, weather-beaten, red face from which his light blue eyes peer short-sightedly, twinkling with a simple good humor. His large mouth, overhung by a thick, drooping, yellow mustache, is childishly self-willed and weak, of an ob-*

stinate kindliness. A thick neck is jammed like a post into the heavy trunk of his body. His arms with their big, hairy, freckled hands, and his stumpy legs terminating in large flat feet, are awkwardly short and muscular. He walks with a clumsy, rolling gait. His voice, when not raised in a hollow boom, is toned down to a sly, confidential half-whisper with something vaguely plaintive in its quality. He is dressed in a wrinkled, ill-fitting dark suit of shore clothes, and wears a faded cap of gray cloth over his mop of grizzled, blond hair. Just now his face beams with a too-blissful happiness, and he has evidently been drinking. He reaches his hand out to JOHNNY).

CHRIS. Hello, Yohnny! Have drink on me. Come on, Larry. Give us drink. Have one yourself. (*Putting his hand in his pocket*) Ay gat money—plenty money. . .

JOHNNY. (*shakes* CHRIS *by the hand*) Speak of the devil. We was just talkin' about you.

LARRY. (*coming to the end of the bar*) Hello, Chris. Put it there. (*They shake hands*).

CHRIS. (*beaming*) Give us drink.

JOHNNY. (*with a grin*) You got a half-snootful now. Where'd you get it?

CHRIS. (*grinning*) Oder fallar on oder barge—Irish fallar—he gat bottle vhisky and we drank it, yust us two. Dot vhisky gat kick, by yingo! Ay yust come ashore. Give us drink, Larry. Ay vas little drunk, not much. Yust feel good. (*He laughs and commences to sing in a nasal, high-pitched quaver*).

"My Yosephine, come board de ship. Long time Ay vait for you. De moon, she shi-i-i-ine. She looka yust like you.

Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee."

(*To the accompaniment of this last he waves his hand as if he were conducting an orchestra*).

JOHNNY. (*with a laugh*) Same old Yosie, eh Chris?

CHRIS. You don't know good song when you hear him. Italian fallar on oder barge, he learn me dat. Give us drink. (*He throws change on the bar*).

LARRY. (*with a professional air*) What's your pleasure, gentlemen?

JOHNNY. Small beer, Larry.

CHRIS. Vhisky—Number Two.

LARRY. (*as he gets their drinks*) I'll take a cigar on you.

CHRIS. (*lifting his glass*) Skoal! (*He drinks*).

JOHNNY. Drink hearty.

CHRIS. (*immediately*) Have oder drink.

JOHNNY. No. Some other time. Got to go home now. So you've just landed? Where are you in from this time?

CHRIS. Norfolk. Ve make slow voyage—dirty vedder—yust fog, fog, fog, all bloody time! (*There is an insistent ring from the doorbell at the family entrance in the back room.* CHRIS *gives a start—hurriedly*) Ay go open, Larry. Ay forgat. It vas Marthy. She come with me. (*He goes into the back room*).

LARRY. (*with a chuckle*) He's still got that same cow livin' with him, the old fool!

JOHNNY. (*with a grin*) A sport, Chris is. Well, I'll beat it home. S'long. (*He goes to the street door*).

LARRY. So long, boss.

JOHNNY. Oh—don't forget to give him his letter.

LARRY. I won't. (JOHNNY *goes out. In the meantime,* CHRIS *has opened the family entrance door, admitting* MARTHY. *She might be forty or fifty. Her jowly, mottled face, with its*

thick red nose, is streaked with interlacing purple veins. Her thick, gray hair is piled anyhow in a greasy mop on top of her round head. Her figure is flabby and fat; her breath comes in wheezy gasps; she speaks in a loud, mannish voice, punctuated by explosions of hoarse laughter. But there still twinkles in her blood-shot blue eyes a youthful lust for life which hard usage has failed to stifle, a sense of humor mocking, but good-tempered. She wears a man's cap, double-breasted man's jacket, and a grimy, calico skirt. Her bare feet are encased in a man's brogans several sizes too large for her, which gives her a shuffling, wobbly gait).

MARTHY. (*grumblingly*) What yuh tryin' to do, Dutchy—keep me standin' out there all day? (*She comes forward and sits at the table in the right corner, front*).

CHRIS. (*mollifyingly*) Ay'm sorry, Marthy. Ay talk to Yohnny. Ay forgat. What you goin' take for drink?

MARTHY. (*appeased*) Gimme a scoop of lager an' ale.

CHRIS. Ay go bring him back. (*He returns to the bar*) Lager and ale for Marthy, Larry. Vhisky for me. (*He throws change on the bar*).

LARRY. Right you are. (*Then remembering, he takes the letter from in back of the bar*) Here's a letter for you—from St. Paul, Minnesota—and a lady's writin'. (*He grins*).

CHRIS. (*quickly—taking it*) Oh, den it come from my daughter, Anna. She live dere. (*He turns the letter over in his hands uncertainly*) Ay don't gat letter from Anna—must be a year.

LARRY. (*jokingly*) That's a fine fairy tale to be tellin'—your daughter! Sure I'll bet it's some bum.

CHRIS. (*soberly*) No. Dis come from Anna. (*Engrossed*

by the letter in his hand—uncertainly) By golly, Ay tank Ay'm too drunk for read dis letter from Anna. Ay tank Ay sat down for a minute. You bring drinks in back room, Larry. (*He goes into the room on right*).

MARTHY. (*angrily*) Where's my lager an' ale, yuh big stiff?

CHRIS. (*preoccupied*) Larry bring him. (*He sits down opposite her.* LARRY *brings in the drinks and sets them on the table. He and* MARTHY *exchange nods of recognition.* LARRY *stands looking at* CHRIS *curiously.* MARTHY *takes a long draught of her schooner and heaves a huge sigh of satisfaction, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.* CHRIS *stares at the letter for a moment—slowly opens it, and, squinting his eyes, commences to read laboriously, his lips moving as he spells out the words. As he reads his face lights up with an expression of mingled joy and bewilderment*).

LARRY. Good news?

MARTHY. (*her curiosity also aroused*) What's that yuh got —a letter, fur Gawd's sake?

CHRIS. (*pauses for a moment, after finishing the letter, as if to let the news sink in—then suddenly pounds his fist on the table with happy excitement*) Py yiminy! Yust tank, Anna say she's comin' here right avay! She gat sick on yob in St. Paul, she say. It's short letter, don't tal me much more'n dat. (*Beaming*) Py golly, dat's good news all at one time for ole fallar! (*Then turning to* MARTHY, *rather shamefacedly*) You know, Marthy, Ay've tole you Ay don't see my Anna since she vas little gel in Sveden five year ole.

MARTHY. How old'll she be now?

CHRIS. She must be—lat me see—she must be twenty year ole, py Yo!

LARRY. (*surprised*) You've not seen her in fifteen years?

CHRIS. (*suddenly growing somber—in a low tone*) No. Ven she vas little gel, Ay vas bo'sun on vindjammer. Ay never gat home only few time dem year. Ay'm fool sailor fallar. My voman—Anna's mother—she gat tired vait all time Sveden for me ven Ay don't never come. She come dis country, bring Anna, dey go out Minnesota, live with her cousins on farm. Den ven her mo'der die ven Ay vas on voyage, Ay tank it's better dem cousins keep Anna. Ay tank it's better Anna live on farm, den she don't know dat ole davil, sea, she don't know fa'der like me.

LARRY. (*with a wink at* MARTHY) This girl, now, 'll be marryin' a sailor herself, likely. It's in the blood.

CHRIS. (*suddenly springing to his feet and smashing his fist on the table in a rage*) No, py God! She don't do dat!

MARTHY. (*grasping her schooner hastily—angrily*) Hey, look out, yuh nut! Wanta spill my suds for me?

LARRY. (*amazed*) Oho, what's up with you? Ain't you a sailor yourself now, and always been?

CHRIS. (*slowly*) Dat's yust vhy Ay say it. (*Forcing a smile*) Sailor vas all right fallar, but not for marry gel. No. Ay know dat. Anna's mo'der, she know it, too.

LARRY. (*as* CHRIS *remains sunk in gloomy reflection*) When is your daughter comin'? Soon?

CHRIS. (*roused*) Py yiminy, Ay forgat. (*Reads through the letter hurriedly*) She say she come right avay, dat's all.

LARRY. She'll maybe be comin' here to look for you, I s'pose. (*He returns to the bar, whistling. Left alone with* MARTHY, *who stares at him with a twinkle of malicious humor*

in her eyes, CHRIS *suddenly becomes desperately ill-at-ease. He fidgets, then gets up hurriedly*).

CHRIS. Ay gat speak with Larry. Ay be right back. (*Mollifyingly*) Ay bring you oder drink.

MARTHY. (*emptying her glass*) Sure. That's me. (*As he retreats with the glass she guffaws after him derisively*).

CHRIS. (*to* LARRY *in an alarmed whisper*) Py yingo, Ay gat gat Marthy shore off barge before Anna come! Anna raise hell if she find dat out. Marthy raise hell, too, for go, py golly!

LARRY. (*with a chuckle*) Serve ye right, ye old divil—havin' a woman at your age!

CHRIS. (*scratching his head in a quandary*) You tal me lie for tal Marthy, Larry, so's she gat off barge quick.

LARRY. She knows your daughter's comin'. Tell her to get the hell out of it.

CHRIS. No. Ay don't like make her feel bad.

LARRY. You're an old mush! Keep your girl away from the barge, then. She'll likely want to stay ashore anyway. (*Curiously*) What does she work at, your Anna?

CHRIS. She stay on dem cousins' farm 'till two year ago. Dan she gat yob nurse gel in St. Paul. (*Then shaking his head resolutely*) But Ay don't vant for her gat yob now. Ay vant for her stay with me.

LARRY. (*scornfully*) On a coal barge! She'll not like that, I'm thinkin'.

MARTHY. (*shouts from next room*) Don't I get that bucket o' suds, Dutchy?

CHRIS. (*startled—in apprehensive confusion*) Yes, Ay come, Marthy.

LARRY. (*drawing the lager and ale, hands it to* CHRIS—*laugh-*

ing) Now you're in for it! You'd better tell her straight to get out!

CHRIS. (*shaking in his boots*) Py golly. (*He takes her drink in to* MARTHY *and sits down at the table. She sips it in silence.* LARRY *moves quietly close to the partition to listen, grinning with expectation.* CHRIS *seems on the verge of speaking, hesitates, gulps down his whisky desperately as if seeking for courage. He attempts to whistle a few bars of "Yosephine" with careless bravado, but the whistle peters out futilely.* MARTHY *stares at him keenly, taking in his embarrassment with a malicious twinkle of amusement in her eye.* CHRIS *clears his throat*) Marthy——

MARTHY. (*aggressively*) Wha's that? (*Then, pretending to fly into a rage, her eyes enjoying* CHRIS' *misery*) I'm wise to what's in back of your nut, Dutchy. Yuh want to git rid o' me, huh?—now she's comin'. Gimme the bum's rush ashore, huh? Lemme tell yuh, Dutchy, there ain't a square-head workin' on a boat man enough to git away with that. Don't start nothin' yuh can't finish!

CHRIS. (*miserably*) Ay don't start nutting, Marthy.

MARTHY. (*glares at him for a second—then cannot control a burst of laughter*) Ho-ho! Yuh're a scream, Square-head—an honest-ter-Gawd knockout! Ho-ho! (*She wheezes, panting for breath*).

CHRIS. (*with childish pique*) Ay don't see nutting for laugh at.

MARTHY. Take a slant in the mirror and yuh'll see. Ho-ho! (*Recovering from her mirth—chuckling, scornfully*) A square-head tryin' to kid Marthy Owen at this late day!—after me campin' with barge men the last twenty years. I'm wise to

the game, up, down, and sideways. I ain't been born and dragged up on the water front for nothin'. Think I'd make trouble, huh? Not me! I'll pack up me duds an' beat it. I'm quittin' yuh, get me? I'm tellin' yuh I'm sick of stickin' with yuh, and I'm leavin' yuh flat, see? There's plenty of other guys on other barges waitin' for me. Always was, I always found. (*She claps the astonished* CHRIS *on the back*) So cheer up, Dutchy! I'll be offen the barge before she comes. You'll be rid o' me for good—and me o' you—good riddance for both of us. Ho-ho!

CHRIS. (*seriously*) Ay don' tank dat. You vas good gel, Marthy.

MARTHY. (*grinning*) Good girl? Aw, can the bull! Well, yuh treated me square, yuhself. So it's fifty-fifty. Nobody's sore at nobody. We're still good frien's, huh? (LARRY *returns to bar*).

CHRIS. (*beaming now that he sees his troubles disappearing*) Yes, py golly.

MARTHY. That's the talkin'! In all my time I tried never to split with a guy with no hard feelin's. But what was yuh so scared about—that I'd kick up a row? That ain't Marthy's way. (*Scornfully*) Think I'd break my heart to loose yuh? Commit suicide, huh? Ho-ho! Gawd! The world's full o' men if that's all I'd worry about! (*Then with a grin, after emptying her glass*) Blow me to another scoop, huh? I'll drink your kid's health for yuh.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) Sure tang. Ay go gat him. (*He takes the two glasses into the bar*) Oder drink. Same for both.

LARRY. (*getting the drinks and putting them on the bar*) She's not such a bad lot, that one.

CHRIS. (*jovially*) She's good gel, Ay tal you! Py golly, Ay calabrate now! Give me vhisky here at bar, too. (*He puts down money.* LARRY *serves him*) You have drink, Larry.

LARRY. (*virtuously*) You know I never touch it.

CHRIS. You don't know what you miss. Skoal! (*He drinks—then begins to sing loudly*).

"My Yosephine, come board de ship——"

(*He picks up the drinks for* MARTHY *and himself and walks unsteadily into the back room, singing*).

"De moon, she shi-i-i-ine. She looks yust like you.
Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee."

MARTHY. (*grinning, hands to ears*) Gawd!

CHRIS. (*sitting down*) Ay'm good singer, yes? Ve drink, eh? Skoal! Ay calabrate! (*He drinks*) Ay calabrate 'cause Anna's coming home. You know, Marthy, Ay never write for her to come, 'cause Ay tank Ay'm no good for her. But all time Ay hope like hell some day she vant for see me and den she come. And dat's vay it happen now, py yiminy! (*His face beaming*) What you tank she look like, Marthy? Ay bet you she's fine, good, strong gel, pooty like hell! Living on farm made her like dat. And Ay bet you some day she marry good, steady land fallar here in East, have home all her own, have kits—and dan Ay'm ole grandfader, py golly! And Ay go visit dem every time Ay gat in port near! (*Bursting with joy*) By yiminy crickens, Ay calabrate dat! (*Shouts*) Bring oder drink, Larry! (*He smashes his fist on the table with a bang*).

LARRY. (*coming in from bar—irritably*) Easy there! Don't be breakin' the table, you old goat!

CHRIS. (*by way of reply, grins foolishly and begins to sing*) "My Yosephine, come board de ship——"

MARTHY. (*touching* CHRIS' *arm persuasively*) You're soused to the ears, Dutchy. Go out and put a feed into you. It'll sober you up. (*Then as* CHRIS *shakes his head obstinately*) Listen, yuh old nut! Yuh don't know what time your kid's liable to show up. Yuh want to be sober when she comes, don't yuh?

CHRIS. (*aroused—gets unsteadily to his feet*) Py golly, yes.

LARRY. That's good sense for you. A good beef stew'll fix you. Go round the corner.

CHRIS. All right. Ay be back soon, Marthy. (CHRIS *goes through the bar and out the street door*).

LARRY. He'll come round all right with some grub in him.

MARTHY. Sure. (LARRY *goes back to the bar and resumes his newspaper.* MARTHY *sips what is left of her schooner reflectively. There is the ring of the family entrance bell.* LARRY *comes to the door and opens it a trifle—then, with a puzzled expression, pulls it wide.* ANNA CHRISTOPHERSON *enters. She is a tall, blond, fully-developed girl of twenty, handsome after a large, Viking-daughter fashion but now run down in health and plainly showing all the outward evidences of belonging to the world's oldest profession. Her youthful face is already hard and cynical beneath its layer of make-up. Her clothes are the tawdry finery of peasant stock turned prostitute. She comes and sinks wearily in a chair by the table, left front*).

ANNA. Gimme a whisky—ginger ale on the side. (*Then, as* LARRY *turns to go, forcing a winning smile at him*) And don't be stingy, baby.

LARRY. (*sarcastically*) Shall I serve it in a pail?

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) That suits me down to the ground. (LARRY *goes into the bar. The two women size each*

other up with frank stares. LARRY *comes back with the drink which he sets before* ANNA *and returns to the bar again.* ANNA *downs her drink at a gulp. Then, after a moment, as the alcohol begins to rouse her, she turns to* MARTHY *with a friendly smile*) Gee, I needed that bad, all right, all right!

MARTHY. (*nodding her head sympathetically*) Sure—yuh look all in. Been on a bat?

ANNA. No—traveling—day and a half on the train. Had to sit up all night in the dirty coach, too. Gawd, I thought I'd never get here!

MARTHY. (*with a start—looking at her intently*) Where'd yuh come from, huh?

ANNA. St. Paul—out in Minnesota.

MARTHY. (*staring at her in amazement—slowly*) So—yuh're—— (*She suddenly bursts out into hoarse, ironical laughter*) Gawd!

ANNA. All the way from Minnesota, sure. (*Flaring up*) What you laughing at? Me?

MARTHY. (*hastily*) No, honest, kid. I was thinkin' of somethin' else.

ANNA. (*mollified—with a smile*) Well, I wouldn't blame you, at that. Guess I do look rotten—yust out of the hospital two weeks. I'm going to have another 'ski. What d'you say? Have something on me?

MARTHY. Sure I will. T'anks. (*She calls*) Hey, Larry! Little service! (*He comes in*).

ANNA. Same for me.

MARTHY. Same here. (LARRY *takes their glasses and goes out*).

ANNA. Why don't you come sit over here, be sociable. I'm

a dead stranger in this burg—and I ain't spoke a word with no one since day before yesterday.

MARTHY. Sure thing. (*She shuffles over to* ANNA's *table and sits down opposite her.* LARRY *brings the drinks and* ANNA *pays him*).

ANNA. Skoal! Here's how! (*She drinks*).

MARTHY. Here's luck! (*She takes a gulp from her schooner*).

ANNA. (*taking a package of Sweet Caporal cigarettes from her bag*) Let you smoke in here, won't they?

MARTHY. (*doubtfully*) Sure. (*Then with evident anxiety*) On'y trow it away if yuh hear someone comin'.

ANNA. (*lighting one and taking a deep inhale*) Gee, they're fussy in this dump, ain't they? (*She puffs, staring at the table top.* MARTHY *looks her over with a new penetrating interest, taking in every detail of her face.* ANNA *suddenly becomes conscious of this appraising stare—resentfully*) Ain't nothing wrong with me, is there? You're looking hard enough.

MARTHY. (*irritated by the other's tone—scornfully*) Ain't got to look much. I got your number the minute you stepped in the door.

ANNA. (*her eyes narrowing*) Ain't you smart! Well, I got yours, too, without no trouble. You're me forty years from now. That's you! (*She gives a hard little laugh*).

MARTHY. (*angrily*) Is that so? Well, I'll tell you straight, kiddo, that Marthy Owen never—— (*She catches herself up short—with a grin*) What are you and me scrappin' over? Let's cut it out, huh? Me, I don't want no hard feelin's with no one. (*Extending her hand*) Shake and forget it, huh?

ANNA. (*shakes her hand gladly*) Only too glad to. I ain't looking for trouble. Let's have 'nother. What d'you say?

MARTHY. (*shaking her head*) Not for mine. I'm full up. And you—— Had anythin' to eat lately?

ANNA. Not since this morning on the train.

MARTHY. Then yuh better go easy on it, hadn't yuh?

ANNA. (*after a moment's hesitation*) Guess you're right. I got to meet someone, too. But my nerves is on edge after that rotten trip.

MARTHY. Yuh said yuh was just outa the hospital?

ANNA. Two weeks ago. (*Leaning over to* MARTHY *confidentially*) The joint I was in out in St. Paul got raided. That was the start. The judge give all us girls thirty days. The others didn't seem to mind being in the cooler much. Some of 'em was used to it. But me, I couldn't stand it. It got my goat right—couldn't eat or sleep or nothing. I never could stand being caged up nowheres. I got good and sick and they had to send me to the hospital. It was nice there. I was sorry to leave it, honest!

MARTHY. (*after a slight pause*) Did yuh say yuh got to meet someone here?

ANNA. Yes. Oh, not what you mean. It's my Old Man I got to meet. Honest! It's funny, too. I ain't seen him since I was a kid—don't even know what he looks like—yust had a letter every now and then. This was always the only address he give me to write him back. He's yanitor of some building here now—used to be a sailor.

MARTHY. (*astonished*) Janitor!

ANNA. Sure. And I was thinking maybe, seeing he ain't never done a thing for me in my life, he might be willing to stake me to a room and eats till I get rested up. (*Wearily*) Gee, I sure need that rest! I'm knocked out. (*Then resign-*

edly) But I ain't expecting much from him. Give you a kick when you're down, that's what all men do. (*With sudden passion*) Men, I hate 'em—all of 'em! And I don't expect he'll turn out no better than the rest. (*Then with sudden interest*) Say, do you hang out around this dump much?

MARTHY. Oh, off and on.

ANNA. Then maybe you know him—my Old Man—or at least seen him?

MARTHY. It ain't old Chris, is it?

ANNA. Old Chris?

MARTHY. Chris Christopherson, his full name is.

ANNA. (*excitedly*) Yes, that's him! Anna Christopherson —that's my real name—only out there I called myself Anna Christie. So you know him, eh?

MARTHY. (*evasively*) Seen him about for years.

ANNA. Say, what's he like, tell me, honest?

MARTHY. Oh, he's short and——

ANNA. (*impatiently*) I don't care what he looks like. What kind is he?

MARTHY. (*earnestly*) Well, yuh can bet your life, kid, he's as good an old guy as ever walked on two feet. That goes!

ANNA. (*pleased*) I'm glad to hear it. Then you think's he'll stake me to that rest cure I'm after?

MARTHY. (*emphatically*) Surest thing you know. (*Disgustedly*) But where'd yuh get the idea he was a janitor?

ANNA. He wrote me he was himself.

MARTHY. Well, he was lyin'. He ain't. He's captain of a barge—five men under him.

ANNA. (*disgusted in her turn*) A barge? What kind of a barge?

MARTHY. Coal, mostly.

ANNA. A coal barge! (*with a harsh laugh*) If that ain't a swell job to find your long lost Old Man working at! Gee, I knew something'd be bound to turn out wrong—always does with me. That puts my idea of his giving me a rest on the bum.

MARTHY. What d'yuh mean?

ANNA. I s'pose he lives on the boat, don't he?

MARTHY. Sure. What about it? Can't you live on it, too?

ANNA. (*scornfully*) Me? On a dirty coal barge! What d'you think I am?

MARTHY. (*resentfully*) What d'yuh know about barges, huh? Bet yuh ain't never seen one. That's what comes of his bringing yuh up inland—away from the old devil sea—where yuh'd be safe—Gawd! (*The irony of it strikes her sense of humor and she laughs hoarsely*).

ANNA. (*angrily*) His bringing me up! Is that what he tells people! I like his nerve! He let them cousins of my Old Woman's keep me on their farm and work me to death like a dog.

MARTHY. Well, he's got queer notions on some things. I've heard him say a farm was the best place for a kid.

ANNA. Sure. That's what he'd always answer back—and a lot of crazy stuff about staying away from the sea—stuff I couldn't make head or tail to. I thought he must be nutty.

MARTHY. He is on that one point. (*Casually*) So yuh didn't fall for life on the farm, huh?

ANNA. I should say not! The old man of the family, his wife, and four sons—I had to slave for all of 'em. I was only a poor relation, and they treated me worse than they dare treat

a hired girl. (*After a moment's hesitation—somberly*) It was one of the sons—the youngest—started me—when I was sixteen. After that, I hated 'em so I'd killed 'em all if I'd stayed. So I run away—to St. Paul.

MARTHY. (*who has been listening sympathetically*) I've heard Old Chris talkin' about your bein' a nurse girl out there. Was that all a bluff yuh put up when yuh wrote him?

ANNA. Not on your life, it wasn't. It was true for two years. I didn't go wrong all at one jump. Being a nurse girl was yust what finished me. Taking care of other people's kids, always listening to their bawling and crying, caged in, when you're only a kid yourself and want to go out and see things. At last I got the chance—to get into that house. And you bet your life I took it! (*Defiantly*) And I ain't sorry neither. (*After a pause—with bitter hatred*) It was all men's fault—the whole business. It was men on the farm ordering and beating me—and giving me the wrong start. Then when I was a nurse, it was men again hanging around, bothering me, trying to see what they could get. (*She gives a hard laugh*) And now it's men all the time. Gawd, I hate 'em all, every mother's son of 'em! Don't you?

MARTHY. Oh, I dunno. There's good ones and bad ones, kid. You've just had a run of bad luck with 'em, that's all. Your Old Man, now—old Chris—he's a good one.

ANNA. (*sceptically*) He'll have to show me.

MARTHY. Yuh kept right on writing him yuh was a nurse girl still, even after yuh was in the house, didn't yuh?

ANNA. Sure. (*Cynically*) Not that I think he'd care a darn.

MARTHY. Yuh're all wrong about him, kid. (*Earnestly*) I know Old Chris well for a long time. He's talked to me 'bout you lots o' times. He thinks the world o' you, honest he does.

ANNA. Aw, quit the kiddin'!

MARTHY. Honest! Only, he's a simple old guy, see? He's got nutty notions. But he means well, honest. Listen to me, kid—— (*She is interrupted by the opening and shutting of the street door in the bar and by hearing* CHRIS' *voice*) Ssshh!

ANNA. What's up?

CHRIS. (*who has entered the bar. He seems considerably sobered up*) Py golly, Larry, dat grub taste good. Marthy in back?

LARRY. Sure—and another tramp with her. (CHRIS *starts for the entrance to the back room*).

MARTHY. (*to* ANNA *in a hurried, nervous whisper*) That's him now. He's comin' in here. Brace up!

ANNA. Who? (CHRIS *opens the door*).

MARTHY. (*as if she were greeting him for the first time*) Why hello, Old Chris. (*Then before he can speak, she shuffles hurriedly past him into the bar, beckoning him to follow her*) Come here. I wanta tell yuh somethin'. (*He goes out to her. She speaks hurriedly in a low voice*) Listen! I'm goin' to beat it down to the barge—pack up me duds and blow. That's her in there—your Anna—just come—waitin' for yuh. Treat her right, see? She's been sick. Well, s'long! (*She goes into the back room—to* ANNA) S'long, kid. I gotta beat it now. See yuh later.

ANNA. (*nervously*) So long. (MARTHY *goes quickly out of the family entrance*).

LARRY. (*looking at the stupefied* CHRIS *curiously*) Well, what's up now?

CHRIS. (*vaguely*) Nutting—nutting. (*He stands before the door to the back room in an agony of embarrassed emotion—then he forces himself to a bold decision, pushes open the door and walks in. He stands there, casts a shy glance at Anna, whose brilliant clothes, and, to him, high-toned appearance, awe him terribly. He looks about him with pitiful nervousness as if to avoid the appraising look with which she takes in his face, his clothes, etc.—his voice seeming to plead for her forbearance*) Anna!

ANNA. (*acutely embarrassed in her turn*) Hello—father. She told me it was you. I yust got here a little while ago.

CHRIS. (*goes slowly over to her chair*) It's good—for see you—after all dem years, Anna. (*He bends down over her. After an embarrassed struggle they manage to kiss each other*).

ANNA. (*a trace of genuine feeling in her voice*) It's good to see you, too.

CHRIS. (*grasps her arms and looks into her face—then overcome by a wave of fierce tenderness*) Anna lilla! Anna lilla! (*Takes her in his arms*).

ANNA. (*shrinks away from him, half-frightened*) What's that—Swedish? I don't know it. (*Then as if seeking relief from the tension in a voluble chatter*) Gee, I had an awful trip coming here. I'm all in. I had to sit up in the dirty coach all night—couldn't get no sleep, hardly—and then I had a hard job finding this place. I never been in New York before, you know, and——

CHRIS. (*who has been staring down at her face admiringly, not hearing what she says—impulsively*) You know you vas

awful pooty gel, Anna? Ay bet all men see you fall in love with you, py yiminy!

ANNA. (*repelled—harshly*) Cut it! You talk same as they all do.

CHRIS. (*hurt—humbly*) Ain't no harm for your fader talk dat vay, Anna.

ANNA. (*forcing a short laugh*) No—course not. Only—it's funny to see you and not remember nothing. You're like—a stranger.

CHRIS. (*sadly*) Ay s'pose. Ay never come home only few times ven you vas kit in Sveden. You don't remember dat?

ANNA. No. (*resentfully*) But why didn't you never come home them days? Why didn't you never come out West to see me?

CHRIS. (*slowly*) Ay tank, after your mo'der die, ven Ay vas avay on voyage, it's better for you you don't never see me! (*He sinks down in the chair opposite her dejectedly—then turns to her—sadly*) Ay don't know, Anna, vhy Ay never come home Sveden in ole year. Ay vant come home end of every voyage. Ay vant see your mo'der, your two bro'der before dey vas drowned, you ven you vas born—but—Ay—don't go. Ay sign on oder ships—go South America, go Australia, go China, go every port all over world many times—but Ay never go aboard ship sail for Sveden. Ven Ay gat money for pay passage home as passenger den—— (*He bows his head guiltily*) Ay forgat and Ay spend all money. Ven Ay tank again, it's too late. (*He sighs*) Ay don't know why but dat's vay with most sailor fallar, Anna. Dat ole davil sea make dem crazy fools with her dirty tricks. It's so.

ANNA. (*who has watched him keenly while he has been speaking—with a trace of scorn in her voice*) Then you think the sea's to blame for everything, eh? Well, you're still workin' on it, ain't you, spite of all you used to write me about hating it. That dame was here told me you was captain of a coal barge —and you wrote me you was yanitor of a building!

CHRIS. (*embarrassed but lying glibly*) Oh, Ay vork on land long time as yanitor. Yust short time ago Ay got dis yob cause Ay vas sick, need open air.

ANNA. (*sceptically*) Sick? You? You'd never think it.

CHRIS. And, Anna, dis ain't real sailor yob. Dis ain't real boat on sea. She's yust ole tub—like piece of land with house on it dat float. Yob on her ain't sea yob. No. Ay don't gat yob on sea, Anna, if Ay die first. Ay swear dat ven your mo'der die. Ay keep my word, py yingo!

ANNA. (*perplexed*) Well, I can't see no difference. (*Dismissing the subject*) Speaking of being sick, I been there myself—yust out of the hospital two weeks ago.

CHRIS. (*immediately all concern*) You, Anna? Py golly! (*Anxiously*) You feel better now, dough, don't you? You look little tired, dat's all!

ANNA. (*wearily*) I am. Tired to death. I need a long rest and I don't see much chance of getting it.

CHRIS. What you mean, Anna?

ANNA. Well, when I made up my mind to come to see you, I thought you was a yanitor—that you'd have a place where, maybe, if you didn't mind having me, I could visit a while and rest up—till I felt able to get back on the job again.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) But Ay gat place, Anna—nice place. You

rest all you want, py yiminy! You don't never have to vork as nurse gel no more. You stay with me, py golly!

ANNA. (*surprised and pleased by his eagerness—with a smile*) Then you're really glad to see me—honest?

CHRIS. (*pressing one of her hands in both of his*) Anna, Ay like see you like hell, Ay tal you! And don't you talk no more about gatting yob. You stay with me. Ay don't see you for long time, you don't forgat dat. (*His voice trembles*) Ay'm gatting ole. Ay gat no one in vorld but you.

ANNA. (*touched—embarrassed by this unfamiliar emotion*) Thanks. It sounds good to hear someone—talk to me that way. Say, though—if you're so lonely—it's funny—why ain't you ever married again?

CHRIS. (*shaking his head emphatically—after a pause*) Ay love your mo'der too much for ever do dat, Anna.

ANNA. (*impressed—slowly*) I don't remember nothing about her. What was she like? Tell me.

CHRIS. Ay tal you all about everytang—and you tal me all tangs happen to you. But not here now. Dis ain't good place for young gel, anyway. Only no good sailor fallar come here for gat drunk. (*He gets to his feet quickly and picks up her bag*) You come with me, Anna. You need lie down, gat rest.

ANNA. (*half rises to her feet, then sits down again*) Where're you going?

CHRIS. Come. Ve gat on board.

ANNA. (*disappointedly*) On board your barge, you mean? (*Dryly*) Nix for mine! (*Then seeing his crestfallen look—forcing a smile*) Do you think that's a good place for a young girl like me—a coal barge?

CHRIS. (*dully*) Yes, Ay tank. (*He hesitates—then con-*

tinues more and more pleadingly) You don't know how nice it's on barge, Anna. Tug come and ve gat towed out on voyage—yust water all round, and sun, and fresh air, and good grub for make you strong, healthy gel. You see many tangs you don't see before. You gat moonlight at night, maybe; see steamer pass; see schooner make sail—see everytang dat's pooty. You need take rest like dat. You work too hard for young gel already. You need vacation, yes!

ANNA. (*who has listened to him with a growing interest—with an uncertain laugh*) It sounds good to hear you tell it. I'd sure like a trip on the water, all right. It's the barge idea has me stopped. Well, I'll go down with you and have a look—and maybe I'll take a chance. Gee, I'd do anything once.

CHRIS. (*picks up her bag again*) Ve go, eh?

ANNA. What's the rush? Wait a second. (*Forgetting the situation for a moment, she relapses into the familiar form and flashes one of her winning trade smiles at him*) Gee, I'm thirsty.

CHRIS. (*sets down her bag immediately—hastily*) Ay'm sorry, Anna. What you tank you like for drink, eh?

ANNA. (*promptly*) I'll take a—— (*Then suddenly reminded—confusedly*) I don't know. What'a they got here?

CHRIS. (*with a grin*) Ay don't tank dey got much fancy drink for young gel in dis place, Anna. Yinger ale—sas'prilla, maybe.

ANNA. (*forcing a laugh herself*) Make it sas, then.

CHRIS. (*coming up to her—with a wink*) Ay tal you, Anna, ve calabrate, yes—dis one time because ve meet after many year. (*In a half whisper, embarrassedly*) Dey gat good port vine, Anna. It's good for you, Ay tank—little bit—for give

you appetite. It ain't strong, neider. One glass don't go to your head, Ay promise.

ANNA. (*with a half hysterical laugh*) All right. I'll take port.

CHRIS. Ay go gat him. (*He goes out to the bar. As soon as the door closes,* ANNA *starts to her feet*).

ANNA. (*picking up her bag—half-aloud—stammeringly*) Gawd, I can't stand this! I better beat it. (*Then she lets her bag drop, stumbles over to her chair again, and covering her face with her hands, begins to sob*).

LARRY. (*putting down his paper as* CHRIS *comes up—with a grin*) Well, who's the blond?

CHRIS. (*proudly*) Dat vas Anna, Larry.

LARRY. (*in amazement*) Your daughter, Anna? (CHRIS *nods.* LARRY *lets a long, low whistle escape him and turns away embarrassedly*).

CHRIS. Don't you tank she vas pooty gel, Larry?

LARRY. (*rising to the occasion*) Sure! A peach!

CHRIS. You bet you! Give me drink for take back—one port vine for Anna—she calabrate dis one time with me—and small beer for me.

LARRY. (*as he gets the drinks*) Small beer for you, eh? She's reformin' you already.

CHRIS. (*pleased*) You bet! (*He takes the drinks. As she hears him coming,* ANNA *hastily dries her eyes, tries to smile.* CHRIS *comes in and sets the drinks down on the table—stares at her for a second anxiously—patting her hand*) You look tired, Anna. Vell, Ay make you take good long rest now. (*Picking up his beer*) Come, you drink vine. It put new life

in you. (*She lifts her glass—he grins*) Skoal, Anna! You know dat Svedish word?

ANNA. Skoal! (*downing her port at a gulp like a drink of whisky—her lips trembling*) Skoal? Guess I know that word, all right, all right!

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT TWO

SCENE. *Ten days later. The stern of the deeply-laden barge,* Simeon Winthrop, *at anchor in the outer harbor of Provincetown, Mass. It is ten o'clock at night. Dense fog shrouds the barge on all sides, and she floats motionless on a calm. A lantern set up on an immense coil of thick hawser sheds a dull, filtering light on objects near it—the heavy steel bits for making fast the tow lines, etc. In the rear is the cabin, its misty windows glowing wanly with the light of a lamp inside. The chimney of the cabin stove rises a few feet above the roof. The doleful tolling of bells, on Long Point, on ships at anchor, breaks the silence at regular intervals.*

As the curtain rises, ANNA *is discovered standing near the coil of rope on which the lantern is placed. She looks healthy, transformed, the natural color has come back to her face. She has on a black oilskin coat, but wears no hat. She is staring out into the fog astern with an expression of awed wonder. The cabin door is pushed open and* CHRIS *appears. He is dressed in yellow oilskins—coat, pants, sou'wester—and wears high seaboots.*

CHRIS. (*the glare from the cabin still in his eyes, peers blinkingly astern*) Anna! (*Receiving no reply, he calls again, this time with apparent apprehension*) Anna!

ANNA. (*with a start—making a gesture with her hand as if to impose silence—in a hushed whisper*) Yes, here I am. What d'you want?

CHRIS. (*walks over to her—solicitously*) Don't you come

turn in, Anna? It's late—after four bells. It ain't good for you stay out here in fog, Ay tank.

ANNA. Why not? (*With a trace of strange exultation*) I love this fog! Honest! It's so—— (*She hesitates, groping for a word*) Funny and still. I feel as if I was—out of things altogether.

CHRIS. (*spitting disgustedly*) Fog's vorst one of her dirty tricks, py yingo!

ANNA. (*with a short laugh*) Beefing about the sea again? I'm getting so's I love it, the little I've seen.

CHRIS. (*glancing at her moodily*) Dat's foolish talk, Anna. You see her more, you don't talk dat vay. (*Then seeing her irritation, he hastily adopts a more cheerful tone*) But Ay'm glad you like it on barge. Ay'm glad it makes you feel good again. (*With a placating grin*) You like live like dis alone with ole fa'der, eh?

ANNA. Sure I do. Everything's been so different from anything I ever come across before. And now—this fog— Gee, I wouldn't have missed it for nothing. I never thought living on ships was so different from land. Gee, I'd yust love to work on it, honest I would, if I was a man. I don't wonder you always been a sailor.

CHRIS. (*vehemently*) Ay ain't sailor, Anna. And dis ain't real sea. You only see nice part. (*Then as she doesn't answer, he continues hopefully*) Vell, fog lift in morning, Ay tank.

ANNA. (*the exultation again in her voice*) I love it! I don't give a rap if it never lifts! (CHRIS *fidgets from one foot to the other worriedly.* ANNA *continues slowly, after a pause*) It makes me feel clean—out here—'s if I'd taken a bath.

CHRIS. (*after a pause*) You better go in cabin read book. Dat put you to sleep.

ANNA. I don't want to sleep. I want to stay out here—and think about things.

CHRIS. (*walks away from her toward the cabin—then comes back*) You act funny tonight, Anna.

ANNA. (*her voice rising angrily*) Say, what're you trying to do—make things rotten? You been kind as kind can be to me and I certainly appreciate it—only don't spoil it all now. (*Then, seeing the hurt expression on her father's face, she forces a smile*) Let's talk of something else. Come. Sit down here. (*She points to the coil of rope*).

CHRIS. (*sits down beside her with a sigh*) It's gatting pooty late in night, Anna. Must be near five bells.

ANNA. (*interestedly*) Five bells? What time is that?

CHRIS. Half past ten.

ANNA. Funny I don't know nothing about sea talk—but those cousins was always talking crops and that stuff. Gee, wasn't I sick of it—and of them!

CHRIS. You don't like live on farm, Anna?

ANNA. I've told you a hundred times I hated it. (*Decidedly*) I'd rather have one drop of ocean than all the farms in the world! Honest! And you wouldn't like a farm, neither. Here's where you belong. (*She makes a sweeping gesture seaward*) But not on a coal barge. You belong on a real ship, sailing all over the world.

CHRIS. (*moodily*) Ay've done dat many year, Anna, when Ay vas damn fool.

ANNA. (*disgustedly*) Oh, rats! (*After a pause she speaks*

musingly) Was the men in our family always sailors—as far back as you know about?

CHRIS. (*shortly*) Yes. Damn fools! All men in our village on coast, Sveden, go to sea. Ain't nutting else for dem to do. My fa'der die on board ship in Indian Ocean. He's buried at sea. Ay don't never know him only little bit. Den my tree bro'der, older'n me, dey go on ships. Den Ay go, too. Den my mo'der she's left all 'lone. She die pooty quick after dat—all 'lone. Ve vas all avay on voyage when she die. (*He pauses sadly*) Two my bro'der dey gat lost on fishing boat same like your bro'ders vas drowned. My oder bro'der, he save money, give up sea, den he die home in bed. He's only one dat ole davil don't kill. (*Defiantly*) But me, Ay bet you Ay die ashore in bed, too!

ANNA. Were all of 'em yust plain sailors?

CHRIS. Able body seaman, most of dem. (*With a certain pride*) Dey vas all smart seaman, too—A one. (*Then after hesitating a moment—shyly*) Ay vas bo'sun.

ANNA. Bo'sun?

CHRIS. Dat's kind of officer.

ANNA. Gee, that was fine. What does he do?

CHRIS. (*after a second's hesitation, plunged into gloom again by his fear of her enthusiasm*) Hard vork all time. It's rotten, Ay tal you, for go to sea. (*Determined to disgust her with sea life—volubly*) Dey're all fool fallar, dem fallar in our family. Dey all vork rotten yob on sea for nutting, don't care nutting but yust gat big pay day in pocket, gat drunk, gat robbed, ship avay again on oder voyage. Dey don't come home. Dey don't do anytang like good man do. And dat ole davil, sea, sooner, later she svallow dem up.

ANNA. (*with an excited laugh*) Good sports, I'd call 'em. (*Then hastily*) But say—listen—did all the women of the family marry sailors?

CHRIS. (*eagerly—seeing a chance to drive home his point*) Yes—and it's bad on dem like hell vorst of all. Dey don't see deir men only once in long while. Dey set and vait all 'lone. And vhen deir boys grows up, go to sea, dey sit and vait some more. (*Vehemently*) Any gel marry sailor, she's crazy fool! Your mo'der she tal you same tang if she vas alive. (*He relapses into an attitude of somber brooding*).

ANNA. (*after a pause—dreamily*) Funny! I do feel sort of—nutty, tonight. I feel old.

CHRIS. (*mystified*) Ole?

ANNA. Sure—like I'd been living a long, long time—out here in the fog. (*Frowning perplexedly*) I don't know how to tell you yust what I mean. It's like I'd come home after a long visit away some place. It all seems like I'd been here before lots of times—on boats—in this same fog. (*With a short laugh*) You must think I'm off my base.

CHRIS. (*gruffly*) Anybody feel funny dat vay in fog.

ANNA. (*persistently*) But why d'you s'pose I feel so—so—like I'd found something I'd missed and been looking for—'s if this was the right place for me to fit in? And I seem to have forgot—everything that's happened—like it didn't matter no more. And I feel clean, somehow—like you feel yust after you've took a bath. And I feel happy for once—yes, honest!—happier than I ever been anywhere before! (*As* CHRIS *makes no comment but a heavy sigh, she continues wonderingly*) It's nutty for me to feel that way, don't you think?

CHRIS. (*a grim foreboding in his voice*) Ay tank Ay'm damn fool for bring you on voyage, Anna.

ANNA. (*impressed by his tone*) You talk—nutty tonight yourself. You act 's if you was scared something was going to happen.

CHRIS. Only God know dat, Anna.

ANNA. (*half-mockingly*) Then it'll be Gawd's will, like the preachers say—what does happen.

CHRIS. (*starts to his feet with fierce protest*) No! Dat ole davil, sea, she ain't God! (*In the pause of silence that comes after his defiance a hail in a man's husky, exhausted voice comes faintly out of the fog to port*) "Ahoy!" (CHRIS *gives a startled exclamation*).

ANNA. (*jumping to her feet*) What's that?

CHRIS. (*who has regained his composure—sheepishly*) Py golly, dat scare me for minute. It's only some fallar hail, Anna—loose his course in fog. Must be fisherman's power boat. His engine break down, Ay guess. (*The "ahoy" comes again through the wall of fog, sounding much nearer this time.* CHRIS *goes over to the port bulwark*) Sound from dis side. She come in from open sea. (*He holds his hands to his mouth, megaphone-fashion, and shouts back*) Ahoy, dere! Vhat's trouble?

THE VOICE. (*this time sounding nearer but up forward toward the bow*) Heave a rope when we come alongside. (*Then irritably*) Where are ye, ye scut?

CHRIS. Ay hear dem rowing. Dey come up by bow, Ay tank. (*Then shouting out again*) Dis vay!

THE VOICE. Right ye are! (*There is a muffled sound of oars in oar-locks*).

ANNA. (*half to herself—resentfully*) Why don't that guy stay where he belongs?

CHRIS. (*hurriedly*) Ay go up bow. All hands asleep 'cepting fallar on vatch. Ay gat heave line to dat fallar. (*He picks up a coil of rope and hurries off toward the bow.* ANNA *walks back toward the extreme stern as if she wanted to remain as much isolated as possible. She turns her back on the proceedings and stares out into the fog.* THE VOICE *is heard again shouting "Ahoy" and* CHRIS *answering "Dis vay." Then there is a pause —the murmur of excited voices—then the scuffling of feet.* CHRIS *appears from around the cabin to port. He is supporting the limp form of a man dressed in dungarees, holding one of the man's arms around his neck. The deckhand,* JOHNSON, *a young blond Swede, follows him, helping along another exhausted man similar fashion.* ANNA *turns to look at them.* CHRIS *stops for a second—volubly*) Anna! You come help, vill you? You find vhisky in cabin. Dese fallars need drink for fix dem. Dey vas near dead.

ANNA. (*hurrying to him*) Sure—but who are they? What's the trouble?

CHRIS. Sailor fallars. Deir steamer gat wrecked. Dey been five days in open boat—four fallars—only one left able stand up. Come, Anna. (*She precedes him into the cabin, holding the door open while he and* JOHNSON *carry in their burdens. The door is shut, then opened again as* JOHNSON *comes out.* CHRIS' *voice shouts after him*) Go gat oder fallar, Yohnson.

JOHNSON. Yes, sir. (*He goes. The door is closed again.* MAT BURKE *stumbles in around the port side of the cabin. He moves slowly, feeling his way uncertainly, keeping hold of the port bulwark with his right hand to steady himself. He is*

stripped to the waist, has on nothing but a pair of dirty dungaree pants. He is a powerful, broad-chested six-footer, his face handsome in a hard, rough, bold, defiant way. He is about thirty, in the full power of his heavy-muscled, immense strength. His dark eyes are bloodshot and wild from sleeplessness. The muscles of his arms and shoulders are lumped in knots and bunches, the veins of his fore-arms stand out like blue cords. He finds his way to the coil of hawser and sits down on it facing the cabin, his back bowed, head in his hands, in an attitude of spent weariness).

BURKE. (*talking aloud to himself*) Row, ye divil! Row! (*Then lifting his head and looking about him*) What's this tub? Well, we're safe anyway—with the help of God. (*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically.* JOHNSON *comes along the deck to port, supporting the fourth man, who is babbling to himself incoherently.* BURKE *glances at him disdainfully*) Is it losing the small wits ye iver had, ye are? Deck-scrubbing scut! (*They pass him and go into the cabin, leaving the door open.* BURKE *sags forward wearily*) I'm bate out—bate out entirely.

ANNA. (*comes out of the cabin with a tumbler quarter-full of whisky in her hand. She gives a start when she sees* BURKE *so near her, the light from the open door falling full on him. Then, overcoming what is evidently a feeling of repulsion, she comes up beside him*) Here you are. Here's a drink for you. You need it, I guess.

BURKE. (*lifting his head slowly—confusedly*) Is it dreaming I am?

ANNA. (*half smiling*) Drink it and you'll find it ain't no dream.

BURKE. To hell with the drink—but I'll take it just the same.

(*He tosses it down*) Ahah! I'm needin' that—and 'tis fine stuff. (*Looking up at her with frank, grinning admiration*) But 'twasn't the booze I meant when I said, was I dreaming. I thought you was some mermaid out of the sea come to torment me. (*He reaches out to feel of her arm*) Aye, rale flesh and blood, divil a less.

ANNA. (*coldly. Stepping back from him*) Cut that.

BURKE. But tell me, isn't this a barge I'm on—or isn't it?

ANNA. Sure.

BURKE. And what is a fine handsome woman the like of you doing on this scow?

ANNA. (*coldly*) Never you mind. (*Then half-amused in spite of herself*) Say, you're a great one, honest—starting right in kidding after what you been through.

BURKE. (*delighted—proudly*) Ah, it was nothing—aisy for a rale man with guts to him, the like of me. (*He laughs*) All in the day's work, darlin'. (*Then, more seriously but still in a boastful tone, confidentially*) But I won't be denying 'twas a damn narrow squeak. We'd all ought to be with Davy Jones at the bottom of the sea, be rights. And only for me, I'm telling you, and the great strength and guts is in me, we'd be being scoffed by the fishes this minute!

ANNA. (*contemptuously*) Gee, you hate yourself, don't you? (*Then turning away from him indifferently*) Well, you'd better come in and lie down. You must want to sleep.

BURKE. (*stung—rising unsteadily to his feet with chest out and head thrown back—resentfully*) Lie down and sleep, is it? Divil a wink I'm after having for two days and nights and divil a bit I'm needing now. Let you not be thinking I'm the like of them three weak scuts come in the boat with me. I could lick

the three of them sitting down with one hand tied behind me. They may be bate out, but I'm not—and I've been rowing the boat with them lying in the bottom not able to raise a hand for the last two days we was in it. (*Furiously, as he sees this is making no impression on her*) And I can lick all hands on this tub, wan be wan, tired as I am!

ANNA. (*sarcastically*) Gee, ain't you a hard guy! (*Then, with a trace of sympathy, as she notices him swaying from weakness*) But never mind that fight talk. I'll take your word for all you've said. Go on and sit down out here, anyway, if I can't get you to come inside. (*He sits down weakly*) You're all in, you might as well own up to it.

BURKE. (*fiercely*) The hell I am!

ANNA. (*coldly*) Well, be stubborn then for all I care. And I must say I don't care for your language. The men I know don't pull that rough stuff when ladies are around.

BURKE. (*getting unsteadily to his feet again—in a rage*) Ladies! Ho-ho! Divil mend you! Let you not be making game of me. What would ladies be doing on this bloody hulk? (*As* ANNA *attempts to go to the cabin, he lurches into her path*) Aisy, now! You're not the old Square-head's woman, I suppose you'll be telling me next—living in his cabin with him, no less! (*Seeing the cold, hostile expression on* ANNA's *face, he suddenly changes his tone to one of boisterous joviality*) But I do be thinking, iver since the first look my eyes took at you, that it's a fool you are to be wasting yourself—a fine, handsome girl—on a stumpy runt of a man like that old Swede. There's too many strapping great lads on the sea would give their heart's blood for one kiss of you!

ANNA. (*scornfully*) Lads like you, eh?

BURKE. (*grinning*) Ye take the words out o' my mouth. I'm the proper lad for you, if it's meself do be saying it. (*With a quick movement he puts his arms about her waist*) Whisht, now, me daisy! Himself's in the cabin. It's wan of your kisses I'm needing to take the tiredness from me bones. Wan kiss, now! (*He presses her to him and attempts to kiss her*).

ANNA. (*struggling fiercely*) Leggo of me, you big mutt! (*She pushes him away with all her might.* BURKE, *weak and tottering, is caught off his guard. He is thrown down backward and, in falling, hits his head a hard thump against the bulwark. He lies there still, knocked out for the moment.* ANNA *stands for a second, looking down at him frightenedly. Then she kneels down beside him and raises his head to her knee, staring into his face anxiously for some sign of life*).

BURKE. (*stirring a bit—mutteringly*) God stiffen it! (*He opens his eyes and blinks up at her with vague wonder*).

ANNA. (*letting his head sink back on the deck, rising to her feet with a sigh of relief*) You're coming to all right, eh? Gee, I was scared for a moment I'd killed you.

BURKE. (*with difficulty rising to a sitting position—scornfully*) Killed, is it? It'd take more than a bit of a blow to crack my thick skull. (*Then looking at her with the most intense admiration*) But, glory be, it's a power of strength is in them two fine arms of yours. There's not a man in the world can say the same as you, that he seen Mat Burke lying at his feet and him dead to the world.

ANNA. (*rather remorsefully*) Forget it. I'm sorry it happened, see? (*Burke rises and sits on bench. Then severely*) Only you had no right to be getting fresh with me. Listen, now, and don't go getting any more wrong notions. I'm on

this barge because I'm making a trip with my father. The captain's my father. Now you know.

BURKE. The old square—the old Swede, I mean?

ANNA. Yes.

BURKE. (*rising—peering at her face*) Sure I might have known it, if I wasn't a bloody fool from birth. Where else'd you get that fine yellow hair is like a golden crown on your head.

ANNA. (*with an amused laugh*) Say, nothing stops you, does it? (*Then attempting a severe tone again*) But don't you think you ought to be apologizing for what you said and done yust a minute ago, instead of trying to kid me with that mush?

BURKE. (*indignantly*) Mush! (*Then bending forward toward her with very intense earnestness*) Indade and I will ask your pardon a thousand times—and on my knees, if ye like. I didn't mean a word of what I said or did. (*Resentful again for a second*) But divil a woman in all the ports of the world has iver made a great fool of me that way before!

ANNA. (*with amused sarcasm*) I see. You mean you're a lady-killer and they all fall for you.

BURKE. (*offended. Passionately*) Leave off your fooling! 'Tis that is after getting my back up at you. (*Earnestly*) 'Tis no lie I'm telling you about the women. (*Ruefully*) Though it's a great jackass I am to be mistaking you, even in anger, for the like of them cows on the waterfront is the only women I've met up with since I was growed to a man. (*As* ANNA *shrinks away from him at this, he hurries on pleadingly*) I'm a hard, rough man and I'm not fit, I'm thinking, to be kissing the shoe-soles of a fine, dacent girl the like of yourself. 'Tis only the ignorance of your kind made me see you wrong. So

you'll forgive me, for the love of God, and let us be friends from this out. (*Passionately*) I'm thinking I'd rather be friends with you than have my wish for anything else in the world. (*He holds out his hand to her shyly*).

ANNA. (*looking queerly at him, perplexed and worried, but moved and pleased in spite of herself—takes his hand uncertainly*) Sure.

BURKE. (*with boyish delight*) God bless you! (*In his excitement he squeezes her hand tight*).

ANNA. Ouch!

BURKE. (*hastily dropping her hand—ruefully*) Your pardon, Miss. 'Tis a clumsy ape I am. (*Then simply—glancing down his arm proudly*) It's great power I have in my hand and arm, and I do be forgetting it at times.

ANNA. (*Nursing her crushed hand and glancing at his arm, not without a trace of his own admiration*) Gee, you're some strong, all right.

BURKE. (*delighted*) It's no lie, and why shouldn't I be, with me shoveling a million tons of coal in the stokeholes of ships since I was a lad only. (*He pats the coil of hawser invitingly*) Let you sit down, now, Miss, and I'll be telling you a bit of myself, and you'll be telling me a bit of yourself, and in an hour we'll be as old friends as if we was born in the same house. (*He pulls at her sleeve shyly*) Sit down now, if you plaze.

ANNA. (*with a half laugh*) Well—— (*She sits down*) But we won't talk about me, see? You tell me about yourself and about the wreck.

BURKE. (*flattered*) I'll tell you, surely. But can I be asking you one question, Miss, has my head in a puzzle?

ANNA. (*guardedly*) Well—I dunno—what is it?

BURKE. What is it you do when you're not taking a trip with the Old Man? For I'm thinking a fine girl the like of you ain't living always on this tub.

ANNA. (*uneasily*) No—of course I ain't. (*She searches his face suspiciously, afraid there may be some hidden insinuation in his words. Seeing his simple frankness, she goes on confidently*) Well, I'll tell you. I'm a governess, see? I take care of kids for people and learn them things.

BURKE. (*impressed*) A governess, is it? You must be smart, surely.

ANNA. But let's not talk about me. Tell me about the wreck, like you promised me you would.

BURKE. (*importantly*) 'Twas this way, Miss. Two weeks out we ran into the divil's own storm, and she sprang wan hell of a leak up for'ard. The skipper was hoping to make Boston before another blow would finish her, but ten days back we met up with another storm the like of the first, only worse. Four days we was in it with green seas raking over her from bow to stern. That was a terrible time, God help us. (*Proudly*) And if 'twasn't for me and my great strength, I'm telling you—and it's God's truth—there'd been mutiny itself in the stokehole. 'Twas me held them to it, with a kick to wan and a clout to another, and they not caring a damn for the engineers any more, but fearing a clout of my right arm more than they'd fear the sea itself. (*He glances at her anxiously, eager for her approval*).

ANNA. (*concealing a smile—amused by this boyish boasting of his*) You did some hard work, didn't you?

BURKE. (*promptly*) I did that! I'm a divil for sticking it

out when them that's weak give up. But much good it did anyone! 'Twas a mad, fightin' scramble in the last seconds with each man for himself. I disremember how it come about, but there was the four of us in wan boat and when we was raised high on a great wave I took a look about and divil a sight there was of ship or men on top of the sea.

ANNA. (*in a subdued voice*) Then all the others was drowned?

BURKE. They was, surely.

ANNA. (*with a shudder*) What a terrible end!

BURKE. (*turns to her*) A terrible end for the like of them swabs does live on land, maybe. But for the like of us does be roaming the seas, a good end, I'm telling you—quick and clane.

ANNA. (*struck by the word*) Yes, clean. That's yust the word for—all of it—the way it makes me feel.

BURKE. The sea, you mean? (*Interestedly*) I'm thinking you have a bit of it in your blood, too. Your Old Man wasn't only a barge rat—begging your pardon—all his life, by the cut of him.

ANNA. No, he was bo'sun on sailing ships for years. And all the men on both sides of the family have gone to sea as far back as he remembers, he says. All the women have married sailors, too.

BURKE. (*with intense satisfaction*) Did they, now? They had spirit in them. It's only on the sea you'd find rale men with guts is fit to wed with fine, high-tempered girls (*then he adds half-boldly*) the like of yourself.

ANNA. (*with a laugh*) There you go kiddin' again. (*Then seeing his hurt expression—quickly*) But you was going to tell me about yourself. You're Irish, of course I can tell that.

BURKE. (*stoutly*) Yes, thank God, though I've not seen a sight of it in fifteen years or more.

ANNA. (*thoughtfully*) Sailors never do go home hardly, do they? That's what my father was saying.

BURKE. He wasn't telling no lie. (*With sudden melancholy*) It's a hard and lonesome life, the sea is. The only women you'd meet in the ports of the world who'd be willing to speak you a kind word isn't woman at all. You know the kind I mane, and they're a poor, wicked lot, God forgive them. They're looking to steal the money from you only.

ANNA. (*her face averted—rising to her feet—agitatedly*) I think—I guess I'd better see what's doing inside.

BURKE. (*afraid he has offended her—beseechingly*) Don't go, I'm saying! Is it I've given you offense with my talk of the like of them? Don't heed it at all! I'm clumsy in my wits when it comes to talking proper with a girl the like of you. And why wouldn't I be? Since the day I left home for to go to sea punching coal, this is the first time I've had a word with a rale, dacent woman. So don't turn your back on me now, and we beginning to be friends.

ANNA. (*turning to him again—forcing a smile*) I'm not sore at you, honest.

BURKE. (*gratefully*) God bless you!

ANNA. (*changing the subject abruptly*) But if you honestly think the sea's such a rotten life, why don't you get out of it?

BURKE. (*surprised*) Work on land, is it? (*She nods. He spits scornfully*) Digging spuds in the muck from dawn to dark, I suppose? (*Vehemently*) I wasn't made for it, Miss.

ANNA. (*with a laugh*) I thought you'd say that.

BURKE. (*argumentatively*) But there's good jobs and bad

jobs at sea, like there'd be on land. I'm thinking if it's in the stokehole of a proper liner I was, I'd be able to have a little house and be home to it wan week out of four. And I'm thinking that maybe then I'd have the luck to find a fine dacent girl—the like of yourself, now—would be willing to wed with me.

ANNA. (*turning away from him with a short laugh—uneasily*) Why sure. Why not?

BURKE. (*edging up close to her—exultantly*) Then you think a girl the like of yourself might maybe not mind the past at all but only be seeing the good herself put in me?

ANNA. (*in the same tone*) Why, sure.

BURKE. (*passionately*) She'd not be sorry for it, I'd take my oath! 'Tis no more drinking and roving about I'd be doing then, but giving my pay day into her hand and staying at home with her as meek as a lamb each night of the week I'd be in port.

ANNA. (*moved in spite of herself and troubled by this half-concealed proposal—with a forced laugh*) All you got to do is find the girl.

BURKE. I have found her!

ANNA. (*half-frightenedly—trying to laugh it off*) You have? When? I thought you was saying——

BURKE. (*boldly and forcefully*) This night. (*Hanging his head—humbly*) If she'll be having me. (*Then raising his eyes to hers—simply*) 'Tis you I mean.

ANNA. (*is held by his eyes for a moment—then shrinks back from him with a strange, broken laugh*) Say—are you—going crazy? Are you trying to kid me? Proposing—to me!—for Gawd's sake!—on such short acquaintance? (CHRIS *comes out of the cabin and stands staring blinkingly astern. When he*

makes out Anna in such intimate proximity to this strange sailor, an angry expression comes over his face).

BURKE. (*following her—with fierce, pleading insistence*) I'm telling you there's the will of God in it that brought me safe through the storm and fog to the wan spot in the world where you was! Think of that now, and isn't it queer——

CHRIS. Anna! (*He comes toward them, raging, his fists clenched*) Anna, you gat in cabin, you hear!

ANNA. (*all her emotions immediately transformed into resentment at his bullying tone*) Who d'you think you're talking to—a slave?

CHRIS. (*hurt—his voice breaking—pleadingly*) You need gat rest, Anna. You gat sleep. (*She does not move. He turns on* BURKE *furiously*) What you doing here, you sailor fallar? You ain't sick like oders. You gat in fo'c's'tle. Dey give you bunk. (*Threateningly*) You hurry, Ay tal you!

ANNA. (*impulsively*) But he is sick. Look at him. He can hardly stand up.

BURKE. (*straightening and throwing out his chest—with a bold laugh*) Is it giving me orders ye are, me bucko? Let you look out, then! With wan hand, weak as I am, I can break ye in two and fling the pieces over the side—and your crew after you. (*Stopping abruptly*) I was forgetting. You're her Old Man and I'd not raise a fist to you for the world. (*His knees sag, he wavers and seems about to fall.* ANNA *utters an exclamation of alarm and hurries to his side*).

ANNA. (*taking one of his arms over her shoulder*) Come on in the cabin. You can have my bed if there ain't no other place.

BURKE. (*with jubilant happiness—as they proceed toward*

the cabin) Glory be to God, is it holding my arm about your neck you are! Anna! Anna! Sure it's a sweet name is suited to you.

ANNA. (*guiding him carefully*) Sssh! Sssh!

BURKE. Whisht, is it? Indade, and I'll not. I'll be roaring it out like a fog horn over the sea! You're the girl of the world and we'll be marrying soon and I don't care who knows it!

ANNA. (*as she guides him through the cabin door*) Ssshh! Never mind that talk. You go to sleep. (*They go out of sight in the cabin.* CHRIS, *who has been listening to* BURKE'S *last words with open-mouthed amazement stands looking after them desperately*).

CHRIS. (*turns suddenly and shakes his fist out at the sea—with bitter hatred*) Dat's your dirty trick, damn ole davil, you! (*Then in a frenzy of rage*) But, py God, you don't do dat! Not while Ay'm living! No, py God, you don't!

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT THREE

SCENE. *The interior of the cabin on the barge,* Simeon Winthrop (*at dock in Boston*)— *a narrow, low-ceilinged compartment the walls of which are painted a light brown with white trimmings. In the rear on the left, a door leading to the sleeping quarters. In the far left corner, a large locker-closet, painted white, on the door of which a mirror hangs on a nail. In the rear wall, two small square windows and a door opening out on the deck toward the stern. In the right wall, two more windows looking out on the port deck. White curtains, clean and stiff, are at the windows. A table with two cane-bottomed chairs stands in the center of the cabin. A dilapidated, wicker rocker, painted brown, is also by the table.*

It is afternoon of a sunny day about a week later. From the harbor and docks outside, muffled by the closed door and windows, comes the sound of steamers' whistles and the puffing snort of the donkey engines of some ship unloading nearby.

As the curtain rises, CHRIS *and* ANNA *are discovered.* ANNA *is seated in the rocking-chair by the table, with a newspaper in her hands. She is not reading but staring straight in front of her. She looks unhappy, troubled, frowningly concentrated on her thoughts.* CHRIS *wanders about the room, casting quick, uneasy side glances at her face, then stopping to peer absent-mindedly out of the window. His attitude betrays an overwhelming, gloomy anxiety which has him on tenterhooks. He pretends to be engaged in setting things ship-shape, but this occupation is confined to picking up some object, staring at it*

stupidly for a second, then aimlessly putting it down again. He clears his throat and starts to sing to himself in a low, doleful voice: "My Yosephine, come board de ship. Long time Ay vait for you."

ANNA. (*turning on him, sarcastically*) I'm glad someone's feeling good. (*Wearily*) Gee, I sure wish we was out of this dump and back in New York.

CHRIS. (*with a sigh*) Ay'm glad vhen ve sail again, too. (*Then, as she makes no comment, he goes on with a ponderous attempt at sarcasm*) Ay don't see vhy you don't like Boston, dough. You have good time here, Ay tank. You go ashore all time, every day and night veek ve've been here. You go to movies, see show, gat all kinds fun—— (*His eyes hard with hatred*) All with that damn Irish fallar!

ANNA. (*with weary scorn*) Oh, for heaven's sake, are you off on that again? Where's the harm in his taking me around? D'you want me to sit all day and night in this cabin with you—and knit? Ain't I got a right to have as good a time as I can?

CHRIS. It ain't right kind of fun—not with that fallar, no.

ANNA. I been back on board every night by eleven, ain't I? (*Then struck by some thought—looks at him with keen suspicion—with rising anger*) Say, look here, what d'you mean by what you yust said?

CHRIS. (*hastily*) Nutting but what Ay say, Anna.

ANNA. You said "ain't right" and you said it funny. Say, listen here, you ain't trying to insinuate that there's something wrong between us, are you?

CHRIS. (*horrified*) No, Anna! No, Ay svear to God, Ay never tank dat!

ANNA. (*mollified by his very evident sincerity—sitting down again*) Well, don't you never think it neither if you want me ever to speak to you again. (*Angrily again*) If I ever dreamt you thought that, I'd get the hell out of this barge so quick you couldn't see me for dust.

CHRIS. (*soothingly*) Ay wouldn't never dream—— (*Then after a second's pause, reprovingly*) You vas gatting learn to svear. Dat ain't nice for young gel, you tank?

ANNA. (*with a faint trace of a smile*) Excuse me. You ain't used to such language, I know. (*Mockingly*) That's what your taking me to sea has done for me.

CHRIS. (*indignantly*) No, it ain't me. It's dat damn sailor fallar learn you bad tangs.

ANNA. He ain't a sailor. He's a stoker.

CHRIS. (*forcibly*) Dat vas million times vorse, Ay tal you! Dem fallars dat vork below shoveling coal vas de dirtiest, rough gang of no-good fallars in vorld!

ANNA. I'd hate to hear you say that to Mat.

CHRIS. Oh, Ay tal him same tang. You don't gat it in head Ay'm scared of him yust 'cause he vas stronger'n Ay vas. (*Menacingly*) You don't gat for fight with fists with dem fallars. Dere's oder vay for fix him.

ANNA. (*glancing at him with sudden alarm*) What d'you mean?

CHRIS. (*sullenly*) Nutting.

ANNA. You'd better not. I wouldn't start no trouble with him if I was you. He might forget some time that you was old and my father—and then you'd be out of luck.

CHRIS. (*with smoldering hatred*) Vell, yust let him! Ay'm ole bird maybe, but Ay bet Ay show him trick or two.

ANNA. (*suddenly changing her tone—persuasively*) Aw come on, be good. What's eating you, anyway? Don't you want no one to be nice to me except yourself?

CHRIS. (*placated—coming to her—eagerly*) Yes, Ay do, Anna—only not fallar on sea. But Ay like for you marry steady fallar got good yob on land. You have little home in country all your own——

ANNA. (*rising to her feet—brusquely*) Oh, cut it out! (*Scornfully*) Little home in the country! I wish you could have seen the little home in the country where you had me in jail till I was sixteen! (*With rising irritation*) Some day you're going to get me so mad with that talk, I'm going to turn loose on you and tell you—a lot of things that'll open your eyes.

CHRIS. (*alarmed*) Ay don't vant——

ANNA. I know you don't; but you keep on talking yust the same.

CHRIS. Ay don't talk no more den, Anna.

ANNA. Then promise me you'll cut out saying nasty things about Mat Burke every chance you get.

CHRIS. (*evasive and suspicious*) Vhy? You like dat fallar —very much, Anna?

ANNA. Yes, I certainly do! He's a regular man, no matter what faults he's got. One of his fingers is worth all the hundreds of men I met out there—inland.

CHRIS. (*his face darkening*) Maybe you tank you love him, den?

ANNA. (*defiantly*) What of it if I do?

CHRIS. (*scowling and forcing out the words*) Maybe—you tank you—marry him?

ANNA. (*shaking her head*) No! (CHRIS' *face lights up with relief.* ANNA *continues slowly, a trace of sadness in her voice*) If I'd met him four years ago—or even two years ago—I'd have jumped at the chance, I tell you that straight. And I would now—only he's such a simple guy—a big kid—and I ain't got the heart to fool him. (*She breaks off suddenly*) But don't never say again he ain't good enough for me. It's me ain't good enough for him.

CHRIS. (*snorts scornfully*) Py yiminy, you go crazy, Ay tank!

ANNA. (*with a mournful laugh*) Well, I been thinking I was myself the last few days. (*She goes and takes a shawl from a hook near the door and throws it over her shoulders*) Guess I'll take a walk down to the end of the dock for a minute and see what's doing. I love to watch the ships passing. Mat'll be along before long, I guess. Tell him where I am, will you?

CHRIS. (*despondently*) All right, Ay tal him. (ANNA *goes out the doorway on rear.* CHRIS *follows her out and stands on the deck outside for a moment looking after her. Then he comes back inside and shuts the door. He stands looking out of the window—mutters—"Dirty ole davil, you." Then he goes to the table, sets the cloth straight mechanically, picks up the newspaper* ANNA *has let fall to the floor and sits down in the rocking-chair. He stares at the paper for a while, then puts it on table, holds his head in his hands and sighs drearily. The noise of a man's heavy footsteps comes from the deck outside and there is a loud knock on the door.* CHRIS *starts, makes a move as if to get up and go to the door, then thinks better of it and sits still. The knock is repeated—then as no answer*

comes, the door is flung open and MAT BURKE *appears.* CHRIS *scowls at the intruder and his hand instinctively goes back to the sheath knife on his hip.* BURKE *is dressed up—wears a cheap blue suit, a striped cotton shirt with a black tie, and black shoes newly shined. His face is beaming with good humor*).

BURKE. (*as he sees* CHRIS—*in a jovial tone of mockery*) Well, God bless who's here! (*He bends down and squeezes his huge form through the narrow doorway*) And how is the world treating you this afternoon, Anna's father?

CHRIS. (*sullenly*) Pooty goot—if it ain't for some faliars.

BURKE. (*with a grin*) Meaning me, do you? (*He laughs*) Well, if you ain't the funny old crank of a man! (*Then soberly*) Where's herself? (CHRIS *sits dumb, scowling, his eyes averted.* BURKE *is irritated by this silence*) Where's Anna, I'm after asking you?

CHRIS. (*hesitating—then grouchily*) She go down end of dock.

BURKE. I'll be going down to her, then. But first I'm thinking I'll take this chance when we're alone to have a word with you. (*He sits down opposite* CHRIS *at the table and leans over toward him*) And that word is soon said. I'm marrying your Anna before this day is out, and you might as well make up your mind to it whether you like it or no.

CHRIS. (*glaring at him with hatred and forcing a scornful laugh*) Ho-ho! Dat's easy for say!

BURKE. You mean I won't? (*Scornfully*) Is it the like of yourself will stop me, are you thinking?

CHRIS. Yes, Ay stop it, if it come to vorst.

BURKE. (*with scornful pity*) God help you!

CHRIS. But ain't no need for me do dat. Anna——

BURKE. (*smiling confidently*) Is it Anna you think will prevent me?

CHRIS. Yes.

BURKE. And I'm telling you she'll not. She knows I'm loving her, and she loves me the same, and I know it.

CHRIS. Ho-ho! She only have fun. She make big fool of you, dat's all!

BURKE. (*unshaken—pleasantly*) That's a lie in your throat, divil mend you!

CHRIS. No, it ain't lie. She tal me yust before she go out she never marry fallar like you.

BURKE. I'll not believe it. 'Tis a great old liar you are, and a divil to be making a power of trouble if you had your way. But 'tis not trouble I'm looking for, and me sitting down here. (*Earnestly*) Let us be talking it out now as man to man. You're her father, and wouldn't it be a shame for us to be at each other's throats like a pair of dogs, and I married with Anna. So out with the truth, man alive. What is it you're holding against me at all?

CHRIS. (*a bit placated, in spite of himself, by* BURKE'S *evident sincerity—but puzzled and suspicious*) Vell—Ay don't vant for Anna gat married. Listen, you fallar. Ay'm a ole man. Ay don't see Anna for fifteen year. She vas all Ay gat in vorld. And now ven she come on first trip—you tank Ay vant her leave me 'lone again?

BURKE. (*heartily*) Let you not be thinking I have no heart at all for the way you'd be feeling.

CHRIS. (*astonished and encouraged—trying to plead persuasively*) Den you do right tang, eh? You ship avay again, leave Anna alone. (*Cajolingly*) Big fallar like you dat's on

sea, he don't need vife. He gat new gel in every port, you know dat.

BURKE. (*angrily for a second*) God stiffen you! (*Then controlling himself—calmly*) I'll not be giving you the lie on that. But divil take you, there's a time comes to every man, on sea or land, that isn't a born fool, when he's sick of the lot of them cows, and wearing his heart out to meet up with a fine dacent girl, and have a home to call his own and be rearing up children in it. 'Tis small use you're asking me to leave Anna. She's the wan woman of the world for me, and I can't live without her now, I'm thinking.

CHRIS. You forgat all about her in one veek out of port, Ay bet you!

BURKE. You don't know the like I am. Death itself wouldn't make me forget her. So let you not be making talk to me about leaving her. I'll not, and be damned to you! It won't be so bad for you as you'd make out at all. She'll be living here in the States, and her married to me. And you'd be seeing her often so—a sight more often than ever you saw her the fifteen years she was growing up in the West. It's quare you'd be the one to be making great trouble about her leaving you when you never laid eyes on her once in all them years.

CHRIS. (*guiltily*) Ay taught it vas better Anna stay away, grow up inland where she don't ever know ole davil, sea.

BURKE. (*scornfully*) Is it blaming the sea for your troubles ye are again, God help you? Well, Anna knows it now. 'Twas in her blood, anyway.

CHRIS. And Ay don't vant she ever know no-good fallar on sea——

BURKE. She knows one now.

CHRIS. (*banging the table with his fist—furiously*) Dat's yust it! Dat's yust what you are—no-good, sailor fallar! You tank Ay lat her life be made sorry by you like her mo'der's vas by me! No, Ay svear! She don't marry you if Ay gat kill you first!

BURKE. (*looks at him a moment, in astonishment—then laughing uproariously*) Ho-ho! Glory be to God, it's bold talk you have for a stumpy runt of a man!

CHRIS. (*threateningly*) Vell—you see!

BURKE. (*with grinning defiance*) I'll see, surely! I'll see myself and Anna married this day, I'm telling you. (*Then with contemptuous exasperation*) It's quare fool's blather you have about the sea done this and the sea done that. You'd ought to be 'shamed to be saying the like, and you an old sailor yourself. I'm after hearing a lot of it from you and a lot more that Anna's told me you do be saying to her, and I'm thinking it's a poor weak thing you are, and not a man at all!

CHRIS. (*darkly*) You see if Ay'm man—maybe quicker'n you tank.

BURKE. (*contemptuously*) Yerra, don't be boasting. I'm thinking 'tis out of your wits you've got with fright of the sea. You'd be wishing Anna married to a farmer, she told me. That'd be a swate match, surely! Would you have a fine girl the like of Anna lying down at nights with a muddy scut stinking of pigs and dung? Or would you have her tied for life to the like of them skinny, shriveled swabs does be working in cities?

CHRIS. Dat's lie, you fool!

BURKE. 'Tis not. 'Tis your own mad notions I'm after telling. But you know the truth in your heart, if great fear

of the sea has made you a liar and coward itself. (*Pounding the table*) The sea's the only life for a man with guts in him isn't afraid of his own shadow! 'Tis only on the sea he's free, and him roving the face of the world, seeing all things, and not giving a damn for saving up money, or stealing from his friends, or any of the black tricks that a landlubber'd waste his life on. 'Twas yourself knew it once, and you a bo'sun for years.

CHRIS. (*sputtering with rage*) You vas crazy fool, Ay tal you!

BURKE. You've swallowed the anchor. The sea give you a clout once, knocked you down, and you're not man enough to get up for another, but lie there for the rest of your life howling bloody murder. (*Proudly*) Isn't it myself the sea has nearly drowned, and me battered and bate till I was that close to hell I could hear the flames roaring, and never a groan out of me till the sea gave up and it seeing the great strength and guts of a man was in me?

CHRIS. (*scornfully*) Yes, you vas hell of fallar, hear you tal it!

BURKE. (*angrily*) You'll be calling me a liar once too often, me old bucko! Wasn't the whole story of it and my picture itself in the newspapers of Boston a week back? (*Looking* CHRIS *up and down belittlingly*) Sure I'd like to see you in the best of your youth do the like of what I done in the storm and after. 'Tis a mad lunatic, screeching with fear, you'd be this minute!

CHRIS. Ho-ho! You vas young fool! In ole years when Ay was on windyammer, Ay vas through hundred storms vorse'n dat! Ships vas ships den—and men dat sail on dem vas real

men. And now what you gat on steamers? You gat fallars on deck don't know ship from mudscow. (*With a meaning glance at* BURKE) And below deck you gat fallars yust know how for shovel coal—might yust as vell vork on coal vagon ashore!

BURKE. (*stung—angrily*) Is it casting insults at the men in the stokehole ye are, ye old ape? God stiffen you! Wan of them is worth any ten stock-fish-swilling Square-heads ever shipped on a windbag!

CHRIS. (*his face working with rage, his hand going back to the sheath-knife on his hip*) Irish svine, you!

BURKE. (*tauntingly*) Don't ye like the Irish, ye old babboon? 'Tis that you're needing in your family, I'm telling you —an Irishman and a man of the stokehole—to put guts in it so that you'll not be having grandchildren would be fearful cowards and jackasses the like of yourself!

CHRIS. (*half rising from his chair—in a voice choked with rage*) You look out!

BURKE. (*watching him intently—a mocking smile on his lips*) And it's that you'll be having, no matter what you'll do to prevent; for Anna and me'll be married this day, and no old fool the like of you will stop us when I've made up my mind.

CHRIS. (*with a hoarse cry*) You don't! (*He throws himself at* BURKE, *knife in hand, knocking his chair over backwards.* BURKE *springs to his feet quickly in time to meet the attack. He laughs with the pure love of battle. The old Swede is like a child in his hands.* BURKE *does not strike or mistreat him in any way, but simply twists his right hand behind his*

back and forces the knife from his fingers. He throws the knife into a far corner of the room—tauntingly).

BURKE. Old men is getting childish shouldn't play with knives. (*Holding the struggling* CHRIS *at arm's length—with a sudden rush of anger, drawing back his fist*) I've half a mind to hit you a great clout will put sense in your square head. Kape off me now, I'm warning you! (*He gives* CHRIS *a push with the flat of his hand which sends the old Swede staggering back against the cabin wall, where he remains standing, panting heavily, his eyes fixed on* BURKE *with hatred, as if he were only collecting his strength to rush at him again*).

BURKE. (*warningly*) Now don't be coming at me again, I'm saying, or I'll flatten you on the floor with a blow, if 'tis Anna's father you are itself! I've no patience left for you. (*Then with an amused laugh*) Well, 'tis a bold old man you are just the same, and I'd never think it was in you to come tackling me alone. (*A shadow crosses the cabin windows. Both men start.* ANNA *appears in the doorway*).

ANNA. (*with pleased surprise as she sees* BURKE) Hello, Mat. Are you here already? I was down—— (*She stops, looking from one to the other, sensing immediately that something has happened*) What's up? (*Then noticing the overturned chair—in alarm*) How'd that chair get knocked over? (*Turning on* BURKE *reproachfully*) You ain't been fighting with him, Mat—after you promised?

BURKE. (*his old self again*) I've not laid a hand on him, Anna. (*He goes and picks up the chair, then turning on the still questioning* ANNA—*with a reassuring smile*) Let you not be worried at all. 'Twas only a bit of an argument we was having to pass the time till you'd come.

ANNA. It must have been some argument when you got to throwing chairs. (*She turns on* CHRIS) Why don't you say something? What was it about?

CHRIS. (*relaxing at last—avoiding her eyes—sheepishly*) Ve vas talking about ships and fallars on sea.

ANNA. (*with a relieved smile*) Oh—the old stuff, eh?

BURKE. (*suddenly seeming to come to a bold decision—with a defiant grin at* CHRIS) He's not after telling you the whole of it. We was arguing about you mostly.

ANNA. (*with a frown*) About me?

BURKE. And we'll be finishing it out right here and now in your presence if you're willing. (*He sits down at the left of table*).

ANNA. (*uncertainly—looking from him to her father*) Sure. Tell me what it's all about.

CHRIS. (*advancing toward the table—protesting to* BURKE) No! You don't do dat, you! You tal him you don't vant for hear him talk, Anna.

ANNA. But I do. I want this cleared up.

CHRIS. (*miserably afraid now*) Vell, not now, anyvay. You vas going ashore, yes? You ain't got time——

ANNA. (*firmly*) Yes, right here and now. (*She turns to* BURKE) You tell me, Mat, since he don't want to.

BURKE. (*draws a deep breath—then plunges in boldly*) The whole of it's in a few words only. So's he'd make no mistake, and him hating the sight of me, I told him in his teeth I loved you. (*Passionately*) And that's God truth, Anna, and well you know it!

CHRIS. (*scornfully—forcing a laugh*) Ho-ho! He tal same tang to gel every port he go!

ANNA. (*shrinking from her father with repulsion—resentfully*) Shut up, can't you? (*Then to* BURKE—*feelingly*) I know it's true, Mat. I don't mind what he says.

BURKE. (*humbly grateful*) God bless you!

ANNA. And then what?

BURKE. And then—— (*Hesitatingly*) And then I said—— (*He looks at her pleadingly*) I said I was sure—I told him I thought you have a bit of love for me, too. (*Passionately*) Say you do, Anna! Let you not destroy me entirely, for the love of God! (*He grasps both her hands in his two*).

ANNA. (*deeply moved and troubled—forcing a trembling laugh*) So you told him that, Mat? No wonder he was mad. (*Forcing out the words*) Well, maybe it's true, Mat. Maybe I do. I been thinking and thinking—I didn't want to, Mat, I'll own up to that—I tried to cut it out—but—— (*She laughs helplessly*) I guess I can't help it anyhow. So I guess I do, Mat. (*Then with a sudden joyous defiance*) Sure I do! What's the use of kidding myself different? Sure I love you, Mat!

CHRIS. (*with a cry of pain*) Anna! (*He sits crushed*).

BURKE. (*with a great depth of sincerity in his humble gratitude*) God be praised!

ANNA. (*assertively*) And I ain't never loved a man in my life before, you can always believe that—no matter what happens.

BURKE. (*goes over to her and puts his arms around her*) Sure I do be believing ivery word you iver said or iver will say. And 'tis you and me will be having a grand, beautiful life together to the end of our days! (*He tries to kiss her. At first she turns away her head—then, overcome by a fierce impulse of passionate love, she takes his head in both her hands*

and holds his face close to hers, staring into his eyes. Then she kisses him full on the lips).

ANNA. (*pushing him away from her—forcing a broken laugh*) Good-by. (*She walks to the doorway in rear—stands with her back toward them, looking out. Her shoulders quiver once or twice as if she were fighting back her sobs*).

BURKE. (*too in the seventh heaven of bliss to get any correct interpretation of her word—with a laugh*) Good-by, is it? The divil you say! I'll be coming back at you in a second for more of the same! (*To* CHRIS, *who has quickened to instant attention at his daughter's good-by, and has looked back at her with a stirring of foolish hope in his eyes*) Now, me old bucko, what'll you be saying? You heard the words from her own lips. Confess I've bate you. Own up like a man when you're bate fair and square. And here's my hand to you—— (*Holds out his hand*) And let you take it and we'll shake and forget what's over and done, and be friends from this out.

CHRIS. (*with implacable hatred*) Ay don't shake hands with you fallar—not vhile Ay live!

BURKE. (*offended*) The back of my hand to you then, if that suits you better. (*Growling*) 'Tis a rotten bad loser you are, divil mend you!

CHRIS. Ay don't lose. (*Trying to be scornful and self-convincing*) Anna say she like you little bit but you don't hear her say she marry you, Ay bet. (*At the sound of her name* ANNA *has turned round to them. Her face is composed and calm again, but it is the dead calm of despair*).

BURKE. (*scornfully*) No, and I wasn't hearing her say the sun is shining either.

CHRIS. (*doggedly*) Dat's all right. She don't say it, yust same.

ANNA. (*quietly—coming forward to them*) No, I didn't say it, Mat.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) Dere! You hear!

BURKE. (*misunderstanding her—with a grin*) You're waiting till you do be asked, you mane? Well, I'm asking you now. And we'll be married this day, with the help of God!

ANNA. (*gently*) You heard what I said, Mat—after I kissed you?

BURKE. (*alarmed by something in her manner*) No—I disremember.

ANNA. I said good-by. (*Her voice trembling*) That kiss was for good-by, Mat.

BURKE. (*terrified*) What d'you mane?

ANNA. I can't marry you, Mat—and we've said good-by. That's all.

CHRIS. (*unable to hold back his exultation*) Ay know it! Ay know dat vas so!

BURKE. (*jumping to his feet—unable to believe his ears*) Anna! Is it making game of me you'd be? 'Tis a quare time to joke with me, and don't be doing it, for the love of God.

ANNA. (*looking him in the eyes—steadily*) D'you think I'd kid you? No, I'm not joking, Mat. I mean what I said.

BURKE. Ye don't! Ye can't! 'Tis mad you are, I'm telling you!

ANNA. (*fixedly*) No, I'm not.

BURKE. (*desperately*) But what's come over you so sudden? You was saying you loved me——

ANNA. I'll say that as often as you want me to. It's true.

BURKE. (*bewilderedly*) Then why—what, in the divil's name—— Oh, God help me, I can't make head or tail to it at all!

ANNA. Because it's the best way out I can figure, Mat. (*Her voice catching*) I been thinking it over and thinking it over day and night all week. Don't think it ain't hard on me, too, Mat.

BURKE. For the love of God, tell me then, what is it that's preventing you wedding me when the two of us has love? (*Suddenly getting an idea and pointing at* CHRIS—*exasperately*) Is it giving heed to the like of that old fool ye are, and him hating me and filling your ears full of bloody lies against me?

CHRIS. (*getting to his feet—raging triumphantly before* ANNA *has a chance to get in a word*) Yes, Anna believe me, not you! She know her old fa'der don't lie like you.

ANNA. (*turning on her father angrily*) You sit down, d'you hear? Where do you come in butting in and making things worse? You're like a devil, you are! (*Harshly*) Good Lord, and I was beginning to like you, beginning to forget all I've got held up against you!

CHRIS. (*crushed feebly*) You ain't got nutting for hold against me, Anna.

ANNA. Ain't I yust! Well, lemme tell you—— (*She glances at* BURKE *and stops abruptly*) Say, Mat, I'm s'prised at you. You didn't think anything he'd said——

BURKE. (*glumly*) Sure, what else would it be?

ANNA. Think I've ever paid any attention to all his crazy bull? Gee, you must take me for a five-year-old kid.

BURKE. (*puzzled and beginning to be irritated at her too*)

I don't know how to take you, with your saying this one minute and that the next.

ANNA. Well, he has nothing to do with it.

BURKE. Then what is it has? Tell me, and don't keep me waiting and sweating blood.

ANNA. (*resolutely*) I can't tell you—and I won't. I got a good reason—and that's all you need to know. I can't marry you, that's all there is to it. (*Distractedly*) So, for Gawd's sake, let's talk of something else.

BURKE. I'll not! (*Then fearfully*) Is it married to someone else you are—in the West maybe?

ANNA. (*vehemently*) I should say not.

BURKE. (*regaining his courage*) To the divil with all other reasons then. They don't matter with me at all. (*He gets to his feet confidently, assuming a masterful tone*) I'm thinking you're the like of them women can't make up their mind till they're drove to it. Well, then, I'll make up your mind for you bloody quick. (*He takes her by the arms, grinning to soften his serious bullying*) We've had enough of talk! Let you be going into your room now and be dressing in your best and we'll be going ashore.

CHRIS. (*aroused—angrily*) No, py God, she don't do that! (*Takes hold of her arm*).

ANNA. (*who has listened to* BURKE *in astonishment. She draws away from him, instinctively repelled by his tone, but not exactly sure if he is serious or not—a trace of resentment in her voice*) Say, where do you get that stuff?

BURKE. (*imperiously*) Never mind, now! Let you go get dressed, I'm saying. (*Then turning to* CHRIS) We'll be seeing who'll win in the end—me or you.

CHRIS. (*to* ANNA—*also in an authoritative tone*) You stay right here, Anna, you hear! (ANNA *stands looking from one to the other of them as if she thought they had both gone crazy. Then the expression of her face freezes into the hardened sneer of her experience*).

BURKE. (*violently*) She'll not! She'll do what I say! You've had your hold on her long enough. It's my turn now.

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) Your turn? Say, what am I, anyway?

BURKE. 'Tis not what you are, 'tis what you're going to be this day—and that's wedded to me before night comes. Hurry up now with your dressing.

CHRIS. (*commandingly*) You don't do one tang he say, Anna! (ANNA *laughs mockingly*).

BURKE. She will, so!

CHRIS. Ay tal you she don't! Ay'm her fa'der.

BURKE. She will in spite of you. She's taking my orders from this out, not yours.

ANNA. (*laughing again*) Orders is good!

BURKE. (*turning to her impatiently*) Hurry up now, and shake a leg. We've no time to be wasting. (*Irritated as she doesn't move*) Do you hear what I'm telling you?

CHRIS. You stay dere, Anna!

ANNA. (*at the end of her patience—blazing out at them passionately*) You can go to hell, both of you! (*There is something in her tone that makes them forget their quarrel and turn to her in a stunned amazement.* ANNA *laughs wildly*) You're just like all the rest of them—you two! Gawd, you'd think I was a piece of furniture! I'll show you! Sit down now! (*As they hesitate—furiously*) Sit down and let me

talk for a minute. You're all wrong, see? Listen to me! I'm going to tell you something—and then I'm going to beat it. (*To* BURKE—*with a harsh laugh*) I'm going to tell you a funny story, so pay attention. (*Pointing to* CHRIS) I've been meaning to turn it loose on him every time he'd get my goat with his bull about keeping me safe inland. I wasn't going to tell you, but you've forced me into it. What's the dif? It's all wrong anyway, and you might as well get cured that way as any other. (*With hard mocking*) Only don't forget what you said a minute ago about it not mattering to you what other reason I got so long as I wasn't married to no one else.

BURKE. (*manfully*) That's my word, and I'll stick to it!

ANNA. (*laughing bitterly*) What a chance! You make me laugh, honest! Want to bet you will? Wait 'n see! (*She stands at the table rear, looking from one to the other of the two men with her hard, mocking smile. Then she begins, fighting to control her emotion and speak calmly*) First thing is, I want to tell you two guys something. You was going on 's if one of you had got to own me. But nobody owns me, see?—'cepting myself. I'll do what I please and no man, I don't give a hoot who he is, can tell me what to do! I ain't asking either of you for a living. I can make it myself—one way or other. I'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe and smoke it! You and your orders!

BURKE. (*protestingly*) I wasn't meaning it that way at all and well you know it. You've no call to be raising this rumpus with me. (*Pointing to* CHRIS) 'Tis him you've a right——

ANNA. I'm coming to him. But you—you did mean it that

way, too. You sounded—yust like all the rest. (*Hysterically*) But, damn it, shut up! Let me talk for a change!

BURKE. 'Tis quare, rough talk, that—for a dacent girl the like of you!

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) Decent? Who told you I was? (CHRIS *is sitting with bowed shoulders, his head in his hands. She leans over in exasperation and shakes him violently by the shoulder*) Don't go to sleep, Old Man! Listen here, I'm talking to you now!

CHRIS. (*straightening up and looking about as if he were seeking a way to escape—with frightened foreboding in his voice*) Ay don't vant for hear it. You vas going out of head, Ay tank, Anna.

ANNA. (*violently*) Well, living with you is enough to drive anyone off their nut. Your bunk about the farm being so fine! Didn't I write you year after year how rotten it was and what a dirty slave them cousins made of me? What'd you care? Nothing! Not even enough to come out and see me! That crazy bull about wanting to keep me away from the sea don't go down with me! You yust didn't want to be bothered with me! You're like all the rest of 'em!

CHRIS. (*feebly*) Anna! It ain't so——

ANNA. (*not heeding his interruption—revengefully*) But one thing I never wrote you. It was one of them cousins that you think is such nice people—the youngest son—Paul—that started me wrong. (*Loudly*) It wasn't none of my fault. I hated him worse'n hell and he knew it. But he was big and strong—(*pointing to Burke*)—like you!

BURKE. (*half springing to his feet—his fists clenched*) God blarst it! (*He sinks slowly back in his chair again, the*

knuckles showing white on his clenched hands, his face tense with the effort to suppress his grief and rage).

CHRIS. (*in a cry of horrified pain*) Anna!

ANNA. (*to him—seeming not to have heard their interruptions*) That was why I run away from the farm. That was what made me get a yob as nurse girl in St. Paul. (*With a hard, mocking laugh*) And you think that was a nice yob for a girl, too, don't you? (*Sarcastically*) With all them nice inland fellers yust looking for a chance to marry me, I s'pose. Marry me? What a chance! They wasn't looking for marrying. (*As* BURKE *lets a groan of fury escape him—desperately*) I'm owning up to everything fair and square. I was caged in, I tell you—yust like in yail—taking care of other people's kids—listening to 'em bawling and crying day and night—when I wanted to be out—and I was lonesome—lonesome as hell! (*With a sudden weariness in her voice*) So I give up finally. What was the use? (*She stops and looks at the two men. Both are motionless and silent.* CHRIS *seems in a stupor of despair, his house of cards fallen about him.* BURKE'S *face is livid with the rage that is eating him up, but he is too stunned and bewildered yet to find a vent for it. The condemnation she feels in their silence goads* ANNA *into a harsh, strident defiance*) You don't say nothing—either of you—but I know what you're thinking. You're like all the rest! (*To* CHRIS—*furiously*) And who's to blame for it, me or you? If you'd even acted like a man—if you'd even had been a regular father and had me with you—maybe things would be different!

CHRIS. (*in agony*) Don't talk dat vay, Anna! Ay go crazy! Ay von't listen! (*Puts his hands over his ears*).

ANNA. (*infuriated by his action—stridently*) You will too

listen! (*She leans over and pulls his hands from his ears—with hysterical rage*) You—keeping me safe inland—I wasn't no nurse girl the last two years—I lied when I wrote you—I was in a house, that's what!—yes, that kind of a house—the kind sailors like you and Mat goes to in port—and your nice inland men, too—and all men, God damn 'em! I hate 'em! Hate 'em! (*She breaks into hysterical sobbing, throwing herself into the chair and hiding her face in her hands on the table. The two men have sprung to their feet*).

CHRIS. (*whimpering like a child*) Anna! Anna! It's lie! It's lie! (*He stands wringing his hands together and begins to weep*).

BURKE. (*his whole great body tense like a spring—dully and gropingly*) So that's what's in it!

ANNA. (*raising her head at the sound of his voice—with extreme mocking bitterness*) I s'pose you remember your promise, Mat? No other reason was to count with you so long as I wasn't married already. So I s'pose you want me to get dressed and go ashore, don't you? (*She laughs*) Yes, you do!

BURKE. (*on the verge of his outbreak—stammeringly*) God stiffen you!

ANNA. (*trying to keep up her hard, bitter tone, but gradually letting a note of pitiful pleading creep in*) I s'pose if I tried to tell you I wasn't—that—no more you'd believe me, wouldn't you? Yes, you would! And if I told you that yust getting out in this barge, and being on the sea had changed me and made me feel different about things, 's if all I'd been through wasn't me and didn't count and was yust like it never happened—you'd laugh, wouldn't you? And you'd die laugh-

ing sure if I said that meeting you that funny way that night in the fog, and afterwards seeing that you was straight goods stuck on me, had got me to thinking for the first time, and I sized you up as a different kind of man—a sea man as different from the ones on land as water is from mud—and that was why I got stuck on you, too. I wanted to marry you and fool you, but I couldn't. Don't you see how I've changed? I couldn't marry you with you believing a lie—and I was shamed to tell you the truth—till the both of you forced my hand, and I seen you was the same as all the rest. And now, give me a bawling out and beat it, like I can tell you're going to. (*She stops, looking at* BURKE. *He is silent, his face averted, his features beginning to work with fury. She pleads passionately*) Will you believe it if I tell you that loving you has made me—clean? It's the straight goods, honest! (*Then as he doesn't reply—bitterly*) Like hell you will! You're like all the rest!

BURKE. (*blazing out—turning on her in a perfect frenzy of rage—his voice trembling with passion*) The rest, is it? God's curse on you! Clane, is it? You slut, you, I'll be killing you now! (*He picks up the chair on which he has been sitting and, swinging it high over his shoulder, springs toward her.* CHRIS *rushes forward with a cry of alarm, trying to ward off the blow from his daughter.* ANNA *looks up into* BURKE'S *eyes with the fearlessness of despair.* BURKE *checks himself, the chair held in the air*).

CHRIS. (*wildly*) Stop, you crazy fool! You vant for murder her!

ANNA. (*pushing her father away brusquely, her eyes still holding* BURKE'S) Keep out of this, you! (*To* BURKE—*dully*)

Well, ain't you got the nerve to do it? Go ahead! I'll be thankful to you, honest. I'm sick of the whole game.

BURKE. (*throwing the chair away into a corner of the room —helplessly*) I can't do it, God help me, and your two eyes looking at me. (*Furiously*) Though I do be thinking I'd have a good right to smash your skull like a rotten egg. Was there iver a woman in the world had the rottenness in her that you have, and was there iver a man the like of me was made the fool of the world, and me thinking thoughts about you, and having great love for you, and dreaming dreams of the fine life we'd have when we'd be wedded! (*His voice high pitched in a lamentation that is like a keen*) Yerra, God help me! I'm destroyed entirely and my heart is broken in bits! I'm asking God Himself, was it for this He'd have me roaming the earth since I was a lad only, to come to black shame in the end, where I'd be giving a power of love to a woman is the same as others you'd meet in any hooker-shanty in port, with red gowns on them and paint on their grinning mugs, would be sleeping with any man for a dollar or two!

ANNA. (*in a scream*) Don't, Mat! For Gawd's sake! (*Then raging and pounding on the table with her hands*) Get out of here! Leave me alone! Get out of here!

BURKE. (*his anger rushing back on him*) I'll be going, surely! And I'll be drinking sloos of whisky will wash that black kiss of yours off my lips; and I'll be getting dead rotten drunk so I'll not remember if 'twas iver born you was at all; and I'll be shipping away on some boat will take me to the other end of the world where I'll never see your face again! (*He turns toward the door*).

CHRIS. (*who has been standing in a stupor—suddenly grasp-*

ing BURKE *by the arm—stupidly*) No, you don't go. Ay tank maybe it's better Anna marry you now.

BURKE. (*shaking* CHRIS *off—furiously*) Lave go of me, ye old ape! Marry her, is it? I'd see her roasting in hell first! I'm shipping away out of this, I'm telling you! (*Pointing to* ANNA—*passionately*) And my curse on you and the curse of Almighty God and all the Saints! You've destroyed me this day and may you lie awake in the long nights, tormented with thoughts of Mat Burke and the great wrong you've done him!

ANNA. (*in anguish*) Mat! (*But he turns without another word and strides out of the doorway.* ANNA *looks after him wildly, starts to run after him, then hides her face in her outstretched arms, sobbing.* CHRIS *stands in a stupor, staring at the floor*).

CHRIS. (*after a pause, dully*) Ay tank Ay go ashore, too.

ANNA. (*looking up, wildly*) Not after him! Let him go! Don't you dare——

CHRIS. (*somberly*) Ay go for gat drink.

ANNA. (*with a harsh laugh*) So I'm driving you to drink, too, eh? I s'pose you want to get drunk so's you can forget —like him?

CHRIS. (*bursting out angrily*) Yes, Ay vant! You tank Ay like hear dem tangs. (*Breaking down—weeping*) Ay tank you vasn't dat kind of gel, Anna.

ANNA. (*mockingly*) And I s'pose you want me to beat it, don't you? You don't want me here disgracing you, I s'pose?

CHRIS. No, you stay here! (*Goes over and pats her on the shoulder, the tears running down his face*) Ain't your fault, Anna, Ay know dat. (*She looks up at him, softened. He bursts*

into rage) It's dat ole davil, sea, do this to me! (*He shakes his fist at the door*) It's her dirty tricks! It vas all right on barge with yust you and me. Den she bring dat Irish fallar in fog, she make you like him, she make you fight with me all time! If dat Irish fallar don't never come, you don't never tal me dem tangs, Ay don't never know, and everytang's all right. (*He shakes his fist again*) Dirty ole davil!

ANNA. (*with spent weariness*) Oh, what's the use? Go on ashore and get drunk.

CHRIS. (*goes into room on left and gets his cap. He goes to the door, silent and stupid—then turns*) You vait here, Anna?

ANNA. (*dully*) Maybe—and maybe not. Maybe I'll get drunk, too. Maybe I'll—— But what the hell do you care what I do? Go on and beat it. (CHRIS *turns stupidly and goes out.* ANNA *sits at the table, staring straight in front of her*).

(*The Curtain Falls*)

ACT FOUR

SCENE. *Same as Act Three, about nine o'clock of a foggy night two days later. The whistles of steamers in the harbor can be heard. The cabin is lighted by a small lamp on the table. A suit case stands in the middle of the floor.* ANNA *is sitting in the rocking-chair. She wears a hat, is all dressed up as in Act One. Her face is pale, looks terribly tired and worn, as if the two days just past had been ones of suffering and sleepless nights. She stares before her despondently, her chin in her hands. There is a timid knock on the door in rear.* ANNA *jumps to her feet with a startled exclamation and looks toward the door with an expression of mingled hope and fear.*

ANNA. (*faintly*) Come in. (*Then summoning her courage —more resolutely*) Come in. (*The door is opened and* CHRIS *appears in the doorway. He is in a very bleary, bedraggled condition, suffering from the after effects of his drunk. A tin pail full of foaming beer is in his hand. He comes forward, his eyes avoiding* ANNA'S. *He mutters stupidly*) It's foggy.

ANNA. (*looking him over with contempt*) So you come back at last, did you? You're a fine looking sight! (*Then jeeringly*) I thought you'd beaten it for good on account of the disgrace I'd brought on you.

CHRIS. (*wincing—faintly*) Don't say dat, Anna, please! (*He sits in a chair by the table, setting down the can of beer, holding his head in his hands*).

ANNA. (*looks at him with a certain sympathy*) What's the trouble? Feeling sick?

CHRIS. (*dully*) Inside my head feel sick.

ANNA. Well, what d'you expect after being soused for two days? (*Resentfully*) It serves you right. A fine thing—you leaving me alone on this barge all that time!

CHRIS. (*humbly*) Ay'm sorry, Anna.

ANNA. (*scornfully*) Sorry!

CHRIS. But Ay'm not sick inside head vay you mean. Ay'm sick from tank too much about you, about me.

ANNA. And how about me? D'you suppose I ain't been thinking, too?

CHRIS. Ay'm sorry, Anna. (*He sees her bag and gives a start*) You pack your bag, Anna? You vas going——?

ANNA. (*forcibly*) Yes, I was going right back to what you think.

CHRIS. Anna!

ANNA. I went ashore to get a train for New York. I'd been waiting and waiting 'till I was sick of it. Then I changed my mind and decided not to go today. But I'm going first thing tomorrow, so it'll all be the same in the end.

CHRIS. (*raising his head—pleadingly*) No, you never do dat, Anna!

ANNA. (*with a sneer*) Why not, I'd like to know?

CHRIS. You don't never gat to do—dat vay—no more, Ay tal you. Ay fix dat up all right.

ANNA. (*suspiciously*) Fix what up?

CHRIS. (*not seeming to have heard her question—sadly*) You vas vaiting, you say? You vasn't vaiting for me, Ay bet.

ANNA. (*callously*) You'd win.

CHRIS. For dat Irish fallar?

ANNA. (*defiantly*) Yes—if you want to know! (*Then with a forlorn laugh*) If he did come back it'd only be 'cause he wanted to beat me up or kill me, I suppose. But even if he did, I'd rather have him come than not show up at all. I wouldn't care what he did.

CHRIS. Ay guess it's true you vas in love with him all right.

ANNA. You guess!

CHRIS. (*turning to her earnestly*) And Ay'm sorry for you like hell he don't come, Anna!

ANNA. (*softened*) Seems to me you've changed your tune a lot.

CHRIS. Ay've been tanking, and Ay guess it vas all my fault—all bad tangs dat happen to you. (*Pleadingly*) You try for not hate me, Anna. Ay'm crazy ole fool, dat's all.

ANNA. Who said I hated you?

CHRIS. Ay'm sorry for everytang Ay do wrong for you, Anna. Ay vant for you be happy all rest of your life for make up! It make you happy marry dat Irish fallar, Ay vant it, too.

ANNA. (*dully*) Well, there ain't no chance. But I'm glad you think different about it, anyway.

CHRIS. (*supplicatingly*) And you tank—maybe—you forgive me sometime?

ANNA. (*with a wan smile*) I'll forgive you right now.

CHRIS. (*seizing her hand and kissing it—brokenly*) Anna lilla! Anna lilla!

ANNA. (*touched but a bit embarrassed*) Don't bawl about it. There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It ain't your

fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we yust get mixed in wrong, that's all.

CHRIS. (*eagerly*) You say right tang, Anna, py golly! It ain't nobody's fault! (*Shaking his fist*) It's dat ole davil, sea!

ANNA. (*with an exasperated laugh*) Gee, won't you ever can that stuff? (CHRIS *relapses into injured silence. After a pause* ANNA *continues curiously*) You said a minute ago you'd fixed something up—about me. What was it?

CHRIS. (*after a hesitating pause*) Ay'm shipping avay on sea again, Anna.

ANNA. (*astounded*) You're—what?

CHRIS. Ay sign on steamer sail tomorrow. Ay gat my ole yob—bo'sun. (ANNA *stares at him. As he goes on, a bitter smile comes over her face*) Ay tank dat's best tang for you. Ay only bring you bad luck, Ay tank. Ay make your mo'der's life sorry. Ay don't vant make yours dat way, but Ay do yust same. Dat ole davil, sea, she make me Yonah man ain't no good for nobody. And Ay tank now it ain't no use fight with sea. No man dat live going to beat her, py yingo!

ANNA. (*with a laugh of helpless bitterness*) So that's how you've fixed me, is it?

CHRIS. Yes, Ay tank if dat ole davil gat me back she leave you alone den.

ANNA. (*bitterly*) But, for Gawd's sake, don't you see you're doing the same thing you've always done? Don't you see——? (*But she sees the look of obsessed stubbornness on her father's face and gives it up helplessly*) But what's the use of talking? You ain't right, that's what. I'll never blame

you for nothing no more. But how you could figure out that was fixing me——!

CHRIS. Dat ain't all. Ay gat dem fallars in steamship office to pay you all money coming to me every month vhile Ay'm avay.

ANNA. (*with a hard laugh*) Thanks. But I guess I won't be hard up for no small change.

CHRIS. (*hurt—humbly*) It ain't much, Ay know, but it's plenty for keep you so you never gat go back——

ANNA. (*shortly*) Shut up, will you? We'll talk about it later, see?

CHRIS. (*after a pause—ingratiatingly*) You like Ay go ashore look for dat Irish fallar, Anna?

ANNA. (*angrily*) Not much! Think I want to drag him back?

CHRIS. (*after a pause—uncomfortably*) Py golly, dat booze don't go vell. Give me fever, Ay tank. Ay feel hot like hell. (*He takes off his coat and lets it drop on the floor. There is a loud thud*).

ANNA. (*with a start*) What you got in your pocket, for Pete's sake—a ton of lead? (*She reaches down, takes the coat and pulls out a revolver—looks from it to him in amazement*) A gun? What were you doing with this?

CHRIS. (*sheepishly*) Ay forget. Ain't nothing. Ain't loaded, anyvay.

ANNA. (*breaking it open to make sure—then closing it again—looking at him suspiciously*) That ain't telling me why you got it?

CHRIS. Ay'm ole fool. Ay got it when Ay go ashore first. Ay tank den it's all fault of dat Irish fallar.

ANNA. (*with a shudder*) Say, you're crazier than I thought. I never dreamt you'd go that far.

CHRIS. (*quickly*) Ay don't. Ay gat better sense right avay. Ay don't never buy bullets even. It ain't his fault, Ay know.

ANNA. (*still suspicious of him*) Well, I'll take care of this for a while, loaded or not. (*She puts it in the drawer of table and closes the drawer*).

CHRIS. (*placatingly*) Throw it overboard if you vant. Ay don't care. (*Then after a pause*) Py golly, Ay tank Ay go lie down. Ay feel sick. (ANNA *takes a magazine from the table.* CHRIS *hesitates by her chair*) Ve talk again before Ay go, yes?

ANNA. (*dully*) Where's this ship going to?

CHRIS. Cape Town. Dat's in South Africa. She's British steamer called Londonderry. (*He stands hesitatingly—finally blurts out*) Anna—you forgive me sure?

ANNA. (*wearily*) Sure I do. You ain't to blame. You're yust—what you are—like me.

CHRIS. (*pleadingly*) Den—you lat me kiss you again once?

ANNA. (*raising her face—forcing a wan smile*) Sure. No hard feelings.

CHRIS. (*kisses her brokenly*) Anna lilla! Ay—— (*He fights for words to express himself, but finds none—miserably —with a sob*) Ay can't say it. Good-night, Anna.

ANNA. Good-night. (*He picks up the can of beer and goes slowly into the room on left, his shoulders bowed, his head sunk forward dejectedly. He closes the door after him.* ANNA *turns over the pages of the magazine, trying desperately to banish her thoughts by looking at the pictures. This fails to*

distract her, and flinging the magazine back on the table, she springs to her feet and walks about the cabin distractedly, clenching and unclenching her hands. She speaks aloud to herself in a tense, trembling voice) Gawd, I can't stand this much longer! What am I waiting for anyway?—like a damn fool! (*She laughs helplessly, then checks herself abruptly, as she hears the sound of heavy footsteps on the deck outside. She appears to recognize these and her face lights up with joy. She gasps*) Mat! (*A strange terror seems suddenly to seize her. She rushes to the table, takes the revolver out of drawer and crouches down in the corner, left, behind the cupboard. A moment later the door is flung open and* MAT BURKE *appears in the doorway. He is in bad shape—his clothes torn and dirty, covered with sawdust as if he had been grovelling or sleeping on barroom floors. There is a red bruise on his forehead over one of his eyes, another over one cheekbone, his knuckles are skinned and raw—plain evidence of the fighting he has been through on his "bat." His eyes are bloodshot and heavy-lidded, his face has a bloated look. But beyond these appearances—the results of heavy drinking—there is an expression in his eyes of wild mental turmoil, of impotent animal rage baffled by its own abject misery*).

BURKE. (*peers blinkingly about the cabin—hoarsely*) Let you not be hiding from me, whoever's here—though 'tis well you know I'd have a right to come back and murder you. (*He stops to listen. Hearing no sound, he closes the door behind him and comes forward to the table. He throws himself into the rocking-chair—despondently*) There's no one here, I'm thinking, and 'tis a great fool I am to be coming. (*With a sort of dumb, uncomprehending anguish*) Yerra, Mat Burke, 'tis

a great jackass you've become and what's got into you at all, at all? She's gone out of this long ago, I'm telling you, and you'll never see her face again. (ANNA *stands up, hesitating, struggling between joy and fear.* BURKE'S *eyes fall on* ANNA'S *bag. He leans over to examine it*) What's this? (*Joyfully*) It's hers. She's not gone! But where is she? Ashore? (*Darkly*) What would she be doing ashore on this rotten night? (*His face suddenly convulsed with grief and rage*) 'Tis that, is it? Oh, God's curse on her! (*Raging*) I'll wait 'till she comes and choke her dirty life out. (ANNA *starts, her face grows hard. She steps into the room, the revolver in her right hand by her side*).

ANNA. (*in a cold, hard tone*) What are you doing here?

BURKE. (*wheeling about with a terrified gasp*) Glory be to God! (*They remain motionless and silent for a moment, holding each other's eyes*).

ANNA. (*in the same hard voice*) Well, can't you talk?

BURKE. (*trying to fall into an easy, careless tone*) You've a year's growth scared out of me, coming at me so sudden and me thinking I was alone.

ANNA. You've got your nerve butting in here without knocking or nothing. What d'you want?

BURKE. (*airily*) Oh, nothing much. I was wanting to have a last word with you, that's all. (*He moves a step toward her*).

ANNA. (*sharply—raising the revolver in her hand*) Careful now! Don't try getting too close. I heard what you said you'd do to me.

BURKE. (*noticing the revolver for the first time*) Is it murdering me you'd be now, God forgive you? (*Then with a*

contemptuous laugh) Or is it thinking I'd be frightened by that old tin whistle? (*He walks straight for her*).

ANNA. (*wildly*) Look out, I tell you!

BURKE. (*who has come so close that the revolver is almost touching his chest*) Let you shoot, then! (*Then with sudden wild grief*) Let you shoot, I'm saying, and be done with it! Let you end me with a shot and I'll be thanking you, for it's a rotten dog's life I've lived the past two days since I've known what you are, 'til I'm after wishing I was never born at all!

ANNA. (*overcome—letting the revolver drop to the floor, as if her fingers had no strength to hold it—hysterically*) What d'you want coming here? Why don't you beat it? Go on! (*She passes him and sinks down in the rocking-chair*).

BURKE. (*following her—mournfully*) 'Tis right you'd be asking why did I come. (*Then angrily*) 'Tis because 'tis a great weak fool of the world I am, and me tormented with the wickedness you'd told of yourself, and drinking oceans of booze that'd make me forget. Forget? Divil a word I'd forget, and your face grinning always in front of my eyes, awake or asleep, 'til I do be thinking a madhouse is the proper place for me.

ANNA. (*glancing at his hands and face—scornfully*) You look like you ought to be put away some place. Wonder you wasn't pulled in. You been scrapping, too, ain't you?

BURKE. I have—with every scut would take off his coat to me! (*Fiercely*) And each time I'd be hitting one a clout in the mug, it wasn't his face I'd be seeing at all, but yours, and me wanting to drive you a blow would knock you out of this world where I wouldn't be seeing or thinking more of you.

ANNA. (*her lips trembling pitifully*) Thanks!

BURKE. (*walking up and down—distractedly*) That's right,

make game of me! Oh, I'm a great coward surely, to be coming back to speak with you at all. You've a right to laugh at me.

ANNA. I ain't laughing at you, Mat.

BURKE. (*unheeding*) You to be what you are, and me to be Mat Burke, and me to be drove back to look at you again! 'Tis black shame is on me!

ANNA. (*resentfully*) Then get out. No one's holding you!

BURKE. (*bewilderedly*) And me to listen to that talk from a woman like you and be frightened to close her mouth with a slap! Oh, God help me, I'm a yellow coward for all men to spit at! (*Then furiously*) But I'll not be getting out of this 'till I've had me word. (*Raising his fist threateningly*) And let you look out how you'd drive me! (*Letting his fist fall helplessly*) Don't be angry now! I'm raving like a real lunatic, I'm thinking, and the sorrow you put on me has my brains drownded in grief. (*Suddenly bending down to her and grasping her arm intensely*) Tell me it's a lie, I'm saying! That's what I'm after coming to hear you say.

ANNA. (*dully*) A lie? What?

BURKE. (*with passionate entreaty*) All the badness you told me two days back. Sure it must be a lie! You was only making game of me, wasn't you? Tell me 'twas a lie, Anna, and I'll be saying prayers of thanks on my two knees to the Almighty God!

ANNA. (*terribly shaken—faintly*) I can't, Mat. (*As he turns away—imploringly*) Oh, Mat, won't you see that no matter what I was I ain't that any more? Why, listen! I packed up my bag this afternoon and went ashore. I'd been waiting here all alone for two days, thinking maybe you'd come back—thinking maybe you'd think over all I'd said—

and maybe—oh, I don't know what I was hoping! But I was afraid to even go out of the cabin for a second, honest—afraid you might come and not find me here. Then I gave up hope when you didn't show up and I went to the railroad station. I was going to New York. I was going back——

BURKE. (*hoarsely*) God's curse on you!

ANNA. Listen, Mat! You hadn't come, and I'd gave up hope. But—in the station—I couldn't go. I'd bought my ticket and everything. (*She takes the ticket from her dress and tries to hold it before his eyes*) But I got to thinking about you—and I couldn't take the train—I couldn't! So I come back here—to wait some more. Oh, Mat, don't you see I've changed? Can't you forgive what's dead and gone—and forget it?

BURKE. (*turning on her—overcome by rage again*) Forget, is it? I'll not forget 'til my dying day, I'm telling you, and me tormented with thoughts. (*In a frenzy*) Oh, I'm wishing I had wan of them fornenst me this minute and I'd beat him with my fists 'til he'd be a bloody corpse! I'm wishing the whole lot of them will roast in hell 'til the Judgment Day—and yourself along with them, for you're as bad as they are.

ANNA. (*shuddering*) Mat! (*Then after a pause—in a voice of dead, stony calm*) Well, you've had your say. Now you better beat it.

BURKE. (*starts slowly for the door—hesitates—then after a pause*) And what'll you be doing?

ANNA. What difference does it make to you?

BURKE. I'm asking you!

ANNA. (*in the same tone*) My bag's packed and I got my ticket. I'll go to New York tomorrow.

BURKE. (*helplessly*) You mean—you'll be doing the same again?

ANNA. (*stonily*) Yes.

BURKE. (*in anguish*) You'll not! Don't torment me with that talk! 'Tis a she-divil you are sent to drive me mad entirely!

ANNA. (*her voice breaking*) Oh, for Gawd's sake, Mat, leave me alone! Go away! Don't you see I'm licked? Why d'you want to keep on kicking me?

BURKE. (*indignantly*) And don't you deserve the worst I'd say, God forgive you?

ANNA. All right. Maybe I do. But don't rub it in. Why ain't you done what you said you was going to? Why ain't you got that ship was going to take you to the other side of the earth where you'd never see me again?

BURKE. I have.

ANNA. (*startled*) What—then you're going—honest?

BURKE. I signed on today at noon, drunk as I was—and she's sailing tomorrow.

ANNA. And where's she going to?

BURKE. Cape Town.

ANNA. (*the memory of having heard that name a little while before coming to her—with a start, confusedly*) Cape Town? Where's that? Far away?

BURKE. 'Tis at the end of Africa. That's far for you.

ANNA. (*forcing a laugh*) You're keeping your word all right, ain't you? (*After a slight pause—curiously*) What's the boat's name?

BURKE. The Londonderry.

ANNA. (*it suddenly comes to her that this is the same ship her father is sailing on*) The Londonderry! It's the same—

Oh, this is too much! (*With wild, ironical laughter*) Ha-ha-ha!

BURKE. What's up with you now?

ANNA. Ha-ha-ha! It's funny, funny! I'll die laughing!

BURKE. (*irritated*) Laughing at what?

ANNA. It's a secret. You'll know soon enough. It's funny. (*Controlling herself—after a pause—cynically*) What kind of a place is this Cape Town? Plenty of dames there, I suppose?

BURKE. To hell with them! That I may never see another woman to my dying hour!

ANNA. That's what you say now, but I'll bet by the time you get there you'll have forgot all about me and start in talking the same old bull you talked to me to the first one you meet.

BURKE. (*offended*) I'll not, then! God mend you, is it making me out to be the like of yourself you are, and you taking up with this one and that all the years of your life?

ANNA. (*angrily assertive*) Yes, that's yust what I do mean! You been doing the same thing all your life, picking up a new girl in every port. How're you any better than I was?

BURKE. (*thoroughly exasperated*) Is it no shame you have at all? I'm a fool to be wasting talk on you and you hardened in badness. I'll go out of this and lave you alone forever. (*He starts for the door—then stops to turn on her furiously*) And I suppose 'tis the same lies you told them all before that you told to me?

ANNA. (*indignantly*) That's a lie! I never did!

BURKE. (*miserably*) You'd be saying that, anyway.

ANNA. (*forcibly, with growing intensity*) Are you trying to accuse me—of being in love—really in love—with them?

BURKE. I'm thinking you were, surely.

ANNA. (*furiously, as if this were the last insult—advancing*

on him threateningly) You mutt, you! I've stood enough from you. Don't you dare. (*With scornful bitterness*) Love 'em! Oh, my Gawd! You damn thick-head! Love 'em? (*Savagely*) I hated 'em, I tell you! Hated 'em, hated 'em, hated 'em! And may Gawd strike me dead this minute and my mother, too, if she was alive, if I ain't telling you the honest truth!

BURKE. (*immensely pleased by her vehemence—a light beginning to break over his face—but still uncertain, torn between doubt and the desire to believe—helplessly*) If I could only be believing you now!

ANNA. (*distractedly*) Oh, what's the use? What's the use of me talking? What's the use of anything? (*Pleadingly*) Oh, Mat, you mustn't think that for a second! You mustn't! Think all the other bad about me you want to, and I won't kick, 'cause you've a right to. But don't think that! (*On the point of tears*) I couldn't bear it! It'd be yust too much to know you was going away where I'd never see you again—thinking that about me!

BURKE. (*after an inward struggle—tensely—forcing out the words with difficulty*) If I was believing—that you'd never had love for any other man in the world but me—I could be forgetting the rest, maybe.

ANNA. (*with a cry of joy*) Mat!

BURKE. (*slowly*) If 'tis truth you're after telling, I'd have a right, maybe, to believe you'd changed—and that I'd changed you myself 'til the thing you'd been all your life wouldn't be you any more at all.

ANNA. (*hanging on his words—breathlessly*) Oh, Mat! That's what I been trying to tell you all along!

BURKE. (*simply*) For I've a power of strength in me to

lead men the way I want, and women, too, maybe, and I'm thinking I'd change you to a new woman entirely, so I'd never know, or you either, what kind of woman you'd been in the past at all.

ANNA. Yes, you could, Mat! I know you could!

BURKE. And I'm thinking 'twasn't your fault, maybe, but having that old ape for a father that left you to grow up alone, made you what you was. And if I could be believing 'tis only me you——

ANNA. (*distractedly*) You got to believe it, Mat! What can I do? I'll do anything, anything you want to prove I'm not lying!

BURKE. (*suddenly seems to have a solution. He feels in the pocket of his coat and grasps something—solemnly*) Would you be willing to swear an oath, now—a terrible, fearful oath would send your soul to the divils in hell if you was lying?

ANNA. (*eagerly*) Sure, I'll swear, Mat—on anything!

BURKE. (*takes a small, cheap old crucifix from his pocket and holds it up for her to see*) Will you swear on this?

ANNA. (*reaching out for it*) Yes. Sure I will. Give it to me.

BURKE. (*holding it away*) 'Tis a cross was given me by my mother, God rest her soul. (*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically*) I was a lad only, and she told me to keep it by me if I'd be waking or sleeping and never lose it, and it'd bring me luck. She died soon after. But I'm after keeping it with me from that day to this, and I'm telling you there's great power in it, and 'tis great bad luck it's saved me from and me roaming the seas, and I having it tied round my neck when my last ship sunk, and it bringing me safe to land when the

others went to their death. (*Very earnestly*) And I'm warning you now, if you'd swear an oath on this, 'tis my old woman herself will be looking down from Hivin above, and praying Almighty God and the Saints to put a great curse on you if she'd hear you swearing a lie!

ANNA. (*awed by his manner—superstitiously*) I wouldn't have the nerve—honest—if it was a lie. But it's the truth and I ain't scared to swear. Give it to me.

BURKE. (*handing it to her—almost frightenedly, as if he feared for her safety*) Be careful what you'd swear, I'm saying.

ANNA. (*holding the cross gingerly*) Well—what do you want me to swear? You say it.

BURKE. Swear I'm the only man in the world ivir you felt love for.

ANNA. (*Looking into his eyes steadily*) I swear it.

BURKE. And that you'll be forgetting from this day all the badness you've done and never do the like of it again.

ANNA. (*forcibly*) I swear it! I swear it by God!

BURKE. And may the blackest curse of God strike you if you're lying. Say it now!

ANNA. And may the blackest curse of God strike me if I'm lying!

BURKE. (*with a stupendous sigh*) Oh, glory be to God, I'm after believing you now! (*He takes the cross from her hand, his face beaming with joy, and puts it back in his pocket. He puts his arm about her waist and is about to kiss her when he stops, appalled by some terrible doubt*).

ANNA. (*alarmed*) What's the matter with you?

BURKE. (*with sudden fierce questioning*) Is it Catholic ye are?

ANNA. (*confused*) No. Why?

BURKE. (*filled with a sort of bewildered foreboding*) Oh, God, help me! (*With a dark glance of suspicion at her*) There's some divil's trickery in it, to be swearing an oath on a Catholic cross and you wan of the others.

ANNA. (*distractedly*) Oh, Mat, don't you believe me?

BURKE. (*miserably*) If it isn't a Catholic you are——

ANNA. I ain't nothing. What's the difference? Didn't you hear me swear?

BURKE. (*passionately*) Oh, I'd a right to stay away from you—but I couldn't! I was loving you in spite of it all and wanting to be with you, God forgive me, no matter what you are. I'd go mad if I'd not have you! I'd be killing the world—— (*He seizes her in his arms and kisses her fiercely*).

ANNA. (*with a gasp of joy*) Mat!

BURKE. (*suddenly holding her away from him and staring into her eyes as if to probe into her soul—slowly*) If your oath is no proper oath at all, I'll have to be taking your naked word for it and have you anyway, I'm thinking—I'm needing you that bad!

ANNA. (*hurt—reproachfully*) Mat! I swore, didn't I?

BURKE. (*defiantly, as if challenging fate*) Oath or no oath, 'tis no matter. We'll be wedded in the morning, with the help of God. (*Still more defiantly*) We'll be happy now, the two of us, in spite of the divil! (*He crushes her to him and kisses her again. The door on the left is pushed open and* CHRIS *appears in the doorway. He stands blinking at them. At first the old expression of hatred of* BURKE *comes into his eyes instinctively.*

Then a look of resignation and relief takes its place. His face lights up with a sudden happy thought. He turns back into the bedroom—reappears immediately with the tin can of beer in his hand—grinning).

CHRIS. Ve have drink on this, py golly! (*They break away from each other with startled exclamations*).

BURKE. (*explosively*) God stiffen it! (*He takes a step toward* CHRIS *threateningly*).

ANNA. (*happily—to her father*) That's the way to talk! (*With a laugh*) And say, it's about time for you and Mat to kiss and make up. You're going to be shipmates on the Londonderry, did you know it?

BURKE. (*astounded*) Shipmates—— Has himself——

CHRIS. (*equally astounded*) Ay vas bo'sun on her.

BURKE. The divil! (*Then angrily*) You'd be going back to sea and leaving her alone, would you?

ANNA. (*quickly*) It's all right, Mat. That's where he belongs, and I want him to go. You got to go, too; we'll need the money. (*With a laugh, as she gets the glasses*) And as for me being alone, that runs in the family, and I'll get used to it. (*Pouring out their glasses*) I'll get a little house somewhere and I'll make a regular place for you two to come back to,—wait and see. And now you drink up and be friends.

BURKE. (*happily—but still a bit resentful against the old man*) Sure! (*Clinking his glass against* CHRIS') Here's luck to you! (*He drinks*).

CHRIS. (*subdued—his face melancholy*) Skoal. (*He drinks*).

BURKE. (*to* ANNA, *with a wink*) You'll not be lonesome long. I'll see to that, with the help of God. 'Tis himself here

will be having a grandchild to ride on his foot, I'm telling you!

ANNA. (*turning away in embarrassment*) Quit the kidding now. (*She picks up her bag and goes into the room on left. As soon as she is gone* BURKE *relapses into an attitude of gloomy thought.* CHRIS *stares at his beer absent-mindedly. Finally* BURKE *turns on him*).

BURKE. Is it any religion at all you have, you and your Anna?

CHRIS. (*surprised*) Vhy yes. Ve vas Lutheran in ole country.

BURKE. (*horrified*) Luthers, is it? (*Then with a grim resignation, slowly, aloud to himself*) Well, I'm damned then surely. Yerra, what's the difference? 'Tis the will of God, anyway.

CHRIS. (*moodily preoccupied with his own thoughts—speaks with somber premonition as* ANNA *re-enters from the left*) It's funny. It's queer, yes—you and me shipping on same boat dat vay. It ain't right. Ay don't know—it's dat funny vay ole davil sea do her vorst dirty tricks, yes. It's so. (*He gets up and goes back and, opening the door, stares out into the darkness*).

BURKE. (*nodding his head in gloomy acquiescence—with a great sigh*) I'm fearing maybe you have the right of it for once, divil take you.

ANNA. (*forcing a laugh*) Gee, Mat, you ain't agreeing with him, are you? (*She comes forward and puts her arm about his shoulder—with a determined gayety*) Aw say, what's the matter? Cut out the gloom. We're all fixed now, ain't we, me and you? (*Pours out more beer into his glass and fills one for herself—slaps him on the back*) Come on! Here's to the sea, no matter what! Be a game sport and drink to that! Come

on! (*She gulps down her glass.* BURKE *banishes his superstitious premonitions with a defiant jerk of his head, grins up at her, and drinks to her toast*).

CHRIS. (*looking out into the night—lost in his somber preoccupation—shakes his head and mutters*) Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see vhere you vas going, no. Only dat ole davil, sea—she knows! (*The two stare at him. From the harbor comes the muffled, mournful wail of steamers' whistles*).

(*The Curtain Falls*)

WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE

A Play in One Act

CHARACTERS

Captain Isaiah Bartlett
Nat Bartlett, *his son*
Sue Bartlett, *his daughter*
Doctor Higgins
Silas Horne, *mate*
Cates, *bo'sun*
Jimmy Kanaka, *harpooner*
} *of the schooner* Mary Allen

WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE

SCENE. *Captain Bartlett's "cabin"—a room erected as a look-out post at the top of his house situated on a high point of land on the California coast. The inside of the compartment is fitted up like the captain's cabin of a deep-sea sailing vessel. On the left, forward, a porthole. Farther back, the stairs of the companionway. Still farther, two more portholes. In the rear, left, a marble-topped sideboard with a ship's lantern on it. In the rear, center, a door opening on stairs which lead to the lower house. A cot with a blanket is placed against the wall to the right of the door. In the right wall, five portholes. Directly under them, a wooden bench. In front of the bench, a long table with two straight-backed chairs, one in front, the other to the left of it. A cheap, dark-colored rug is on the floor. In the ceiling, midway from front to rear, a skylight extending from opposite the door to above the left edge of the table. In the right extremity of the skylight is placed a floating ship's compass. The light from the binnacle sheds over this from above and seeps down into the room, casting a vague globular shadow of the compass on the floor.*

The time is an early hour of a clear windy night in the fall of the year 1900. Moonlight, winnowed by the wind which moans in the stubborn angles of the old house, creeps wearily in through the portholes and rests like tired dust in circular patches upon the floor and table. An insistent monotone of thundering surf, muffled and far-off, is borne upward from the beach below.

After the curtain rises the door in the rear is opened slowly and the head and shoulders of NAT BARTLETT *appear over the sill. He casts a quick glance about the room, and seeing no one there, ascends the remaining steps and enters. He makes a sign to someone in the darkness beneath: "All right, Doctor."* DOCTOR HIGGINS *follows him into the room and, closing the door, stands looking with great curiosity around him. He is a slight, medium-sized professional-looking man of about thirty-five.* NAT BARTLETT *is very tall, gaunt, and loose-framed. His right arm has been amputated at the shoulder and the sleeve on that side of the heavy mackinaw he wears hangs flabbily or flaps against his body as he moves. He appears much older than his thirty years. His shoulders have a weary stoop as if worn down by the burden of his massive head with its heavy shock of tangled black hair. His face is long, bony, and sallow, with deep-set black eyes, a large aquiline nose, a wide thin-lipped mouth shadowed by an unkempt bristle of mustache. His voice is low and deep with a penetrating, hollow, metallic quality. In addition to the mackinaw, he wears corduroy trousers stuffed down into high laced boots.*

NAT. Can you see, Doctor?

HIGGINS. (*in the too-casual tones which betray an inward uneasiness*) Yes—perfectly—don't trouble. The moonlight is so bright——

NAT. Luckily. (*Walking slowly toward the table*) He doesn't want any light—lately—only the one from the binnacle there.

HIGGINS. He? Ah—you mean your father?

NAT. (*impatiently*) Who else?

HIGGINS. (*a bit startled—gazing around him in embarrass-*

ment) I suppose this is all meant to be like a ship's cabin?

NAT. Yes—as I warned you.

HIGGINS. (*in surprise*) Warned me? Why, warned? I think it's very natural—and interesting—this whim of his.

NAT. (*meaningly*) Interesting, it may be.

HIGGINS. And he lives up here, you said—never comes down?

NAT. Never—for the past three years. My sister brings his food up to him. (*He sits down in the chair to the left of the table*) There's a lantern on the sideboard there, Doctor. Bring it over and sit down. We'll make a light. I'll ask your pardon for bringing you to this room on the roof—but—no one'll hear us here; and by seeing for yourself the mad way he lives—— Understand that I want you to get all the facts—just that, facts! —and for that light is necessary. Without that—they become dreams up here—dreams, Doctor.

HIGGINS. (*with a relieved smile carries over the lantern*) It is a trifle spooky.

NAT. (*not seeming to notice this remark*) He won't take any note of this light. His eyes are too busy—out there. (*He flings his left arm in a wide gesture seaward*) And if he does notice—well, let him come down. You're bound to see him sooner or later. (*He scratches a match and lights the lantern*)

HIGGINS. Where is—he?

NAT. (*pointing upward*) Up on the poop. Sit down, man! He'll not come—yet awhile.

HIGGINS. (*sitting gingerly on the chair in front of table*) Then he has the roof too rigged up like a ship?

NAT. I told you he had. Like a deck, yes. A wheel, compass, binnacle light, the companionway there (*he points*), a bridge to pace up and down on—*and keep watch.* If the wind wasn't

so high you'd hear him now—back and forth—all the live-long night. (*With a sudden harshness*) Didn't I tell you he's mad?

HIGGINS. (*with a professional air*) That was nothing new. I've heard that about him from all sides since I first came to the asylum yonder. You say he only walks at night—up there?

NAT. Only at night, yes. (*Grimly*) The things he wants to see can't be made out in daylight—dreams and such.

HIGGINS. But just what is he trying to see? Does anyone know? Does he tell?

NAT. (*impatiently*) Why, everyone knows what Father looks for, man! The ship, of course.

HIGGINS. What ship?

NAT. His ship—the Mary Allen—named for my dead mother.

HIGGINS. But—I don't understand—— Is the ship long overdue—or what?

NAT. Lost in a hurricane off the Celebes with all on board—three years ago!

HIGGINS. (*wonderingly*) Ah. (*After a pause*) But your father still clings to a doubt——

NAT. There is no doubt for him or anyone else to cling to. She was sighted bottom up, a complete wreck, by the whaler John Slocum. That was two weeks after the storm. They sent a boat out to read her name.

HIGGINS. And hasn't your father ever heard——

NAT. He was the first to hear, naturally. Oh, he *knows* right enough, if that's what you're driving at. (*He bends toward the doctor—intensely*) He *knows*, Doctor, he *knows*—but he won't *believe*. He can't—and keep living.

HIGGINS. (*impatiently*) Come, Mr. Bartlett, let's get down to brass tacks. You didn't drag me up here to make things more

obscure, did you? Let's have the facts you spoke of. I'll need them to give sympathetic treatment to his case when we get him to the asylum.

NAT. (*anxiously—lowering his voice*) And you'll come to take him away tonight—for sure?

HIGGINS. Twenty minutes after I leave here I'll be back in the car. That's positive.

NAT. And you know your way through the house?

HIGGINS. Certainly, I remember—but I don't see——

NAT. The outside door will be left open for you. You must come right up. My sister and I will be here—with him. And you understand—— Neither of us knows anything about this. The authorities have been complained to—not by us, mind—but by someone. He must never know——

HIGGINS. Yes, yes—but still I don't—— Is he liable to prove violent?

NAT. No—no. He's quiet always—too quiet; but he might do something—anything—if he knows——

HIGGINS. Rely on me not to tell him, then; but I'll bring along two attendants in case—— (*He breaks off and continues in matter-of-fact tones*) And now for the facts in this case, if you don't mind, Mr. Bartlett.

NAT. (*shaking his head—moodily*) There are cases where facts—— Well, here goes—the brass tacks. My father was a whaling captain as his father before him. The last trip he made was seven years ago. He expected to be gone two years. It was four before we saw him again. His ship had been wrecked in the Indian Ocean. He and six others managed to reach a small island on the fringe of the Archipelago—an island barren as hell, Doctor—after seven days in an open boat. The

rest of the whaling crew never were heard from again—gone to the sharks. Of the six who reached the island with my father only three were alive when a fleet of Malay canoes picked them up, mad from thirst and starvation, the four of them. These four men finally reached Frisco. (*With great emphasis*) They were my father; Silas Horne, the mate; Cates, the bo'sun, and Jimmy Kanaka, a Hawaiian harpooner. Those four! (*With a forced laugh*) There are facts for you. It was all in the papers at the time—my father's story.

HIGGINS. But what of the other three who were on the island?

NAT. (*harshly*) Died of exposure, perhaps. Mad and jumped into the sea, perhaps. That was the told story. Another was whispered—killed and eaten, perhaps! But gone—vanished—that, undeniably. That was the fact. For the rest—who knows? And what does it matter?

HIGGINS. (*with a shudder*) I should think it would matter—a lot.

NAT. (*fiercely*) We're dealing with facts, Doctor! (*With a laugh*) And here are some more for you. My father brought the three down to this house with him—Horne and Cates and Jimmy Kanaka. We hardly recognized my father. He had been through hell and looked it. His hair was white. But you'll see for yourself—soon. And the others—they were all a bit queer, too—mad, if you will. (*He laughs again*) So much for the facts, Doctor. They leave off there and the dreams begin.

HIGGINS. (*doubtfully*) It would seem—the facts are enough.

NAT. Wait. (*He resumes deliberately*) One day my father sent for me and in the presence of the others told me the dream. I was to be heir to the secret. Their second day on the island,

he said, they discovered in a sheltered inlet the rotten, water-logged hulk of a Malay prau—a proper war-prau such as the pirates used to use. She had been there rotting—God knows how long. The crew had vanished—God knows where, for there was no sign on the island that man had ever touched there. The Kanakas went over the prau—they're devils for staying under water, you know—and they found—in two chests—— (*He leans back in his chair and smiles ironically*) Guess what, Doctor?

HIGGINS. (*with an answering smile*) Treasure, of course.

NAT. (*leaning forward and pointing his finger accusingly at the other*) You see! The root of belief is in you, too! (*Then he leans back with a hollow chuckle*) Why, yes. Treasure, to be sure. What else? They landed it and—you can guess the rest, too—diamonds, emeralds, gold ornaments—innumerable, of course. Why limit the stuff of dreams? Ha-ha! (*He laughs sardonically as if mocking himself*)

HIGGINS. (*deeply interested*) And then?

NAT. They began to go mad—hunger, thirst, and the rest—and they began to forget. Oh, they forgot a lot, and lucky for them they did, probably. But my father realizing, as he told me, what was happening to them, insisted that while they still knew what they were doing they should—guess again now, Doctor. Ha-ha!

HIGGINS. Bury the treasure?

NAT. (*ironically*) Simple, isn't it? Ha-ha. And then they made a map—the same old dream, you see—with a charred stick, and my father had care of it. They were picked up soon after, mad as hatters, as I have told you, by some Malays. (*He drops his mocking and adopts a calm, deliberate tone again*)

But the map isn't a dream, Doctor. We're coming back to facts again. (*He reaches into the pocket of his mackinaw and pulls out a crumpled paper*) Here. (*He spreads it out on the table*)

HIGGINS. (*craning his neck eagerly*) Dammit! This is interesting. The treasure, I suppose, is where——

NAT. Where the cross is made.

HIGGINS. And here are the signatures, I see. And that sign?

NAT. Jimmy Kanaka's. He couldn't write.

HIGGINS. And below? That's yours, isn't it?

NAT. As heir to the secret, yes. We all signed it here the morning the Mary Allen, the schooner my father had mortgaged this house to fit out, set sail to bring back the treasure. Ha-ha.

HIGGINS. The ship he's still looking for—that was lost three years ago?

NAT. The Mary Allen, yes. The other three men sailed away on her. Only father and the mate knew the approximate location of the island—and I—as heir. It's—— (*He hesitates, frowning*) No matter. I'll keep the mad secret. My father wanted to go with them—but my mother was dying. I dared not go either.

HIGGINS. Then you wanted to go? You believed in the treasure then?

NAT. Of course. Ha-ha. How could I help it? I believed until my mother's death. Then *he* became mad, entirely mad. He built this cabin—to wait in—and he suspected my growing doubt as time went on. So, as final proof, he gave me a thing he had kept hidden from them all—a sample of the richest of the treasure. Ha-ha. Behold! (*He takes from his pocket a*

heavy bracelet thickly studded with stones and throws it on the table near the lantern)

HIGGINS. (*picking it up with eager curiosity—as if in spite of himself*) Real jewels?

NAT. Ha-ha! You want to believe, too. No—paste and brass—Malay ornaments.

HIGGINS. You had it looked over?

NAT. Like a fool, yes. (*He puts it back in his pocket and shakes his head as if throwing off a burden*) Now you know why he's mad—waiting for that ship—and why in the end I had to ask you to take him away where he'll be safe. The mortgage—the price of that ship—is to be foreclosed. We have to move, my sister and I. We can't take him with us. She is to be married soon. Perhaps away from the sight of the sea he may——

HIGGINS. (*perfunctorily*) Let's hope for the best. And I fully appreciate your position. (*He gets up, smiling*) And thank you for the interesting story. I'll know how to humor him when he raves about treasure.

NAT. (*somberly*) He is quiet always—too quiet. He only walks to and fro—watching——

HIGGINS Well, I must go. You think it's best to take him tonight?

NAT. (*persuasively*) Yes, Doctor. The neighbors—they're far away but—for my sister's sake—you understand.

HIGGINS. I see. It must be hard on her—this sort of thing—Well—(*he goes to the door, which* NAT *opens for him*) I'll return presently. (*He starts to descend*)

NAT. (*urgently*) Don't fail us, Doctor. And come right up. He'll be here.

(*He closes the door and tiptoes carefully to the companionway. He ascends it a few steps and remains for a moment listening for some sound from above. Then he goes over to the table, turning the lantern very low, and sits down, resting his elbows, his chin on his hands, staring somberly before him. The door in the rear is slowly opened. It creaks slightly and* NAT *jumps to his feet—in a thick voice of terror*) Who's there? (*The door swings wide open, revealing* SUE BARTLETT. *She ascends into the room and shuts the door behind her. She is a tall, slender woman of twenty-five, with a pale, sad face framed in a mass of dark red hair. This hair furnishes the only touch of color about her. Her full lips are pale; the blue of her wistful wide eyes is fading into a twilight gray. Her voice is low and melancholy. She wears a dark wrapper and slippers*)

SUE. (*stands and looks at her brother accusingly*) It's only I. What are you afraid of?

NAT. (*averts his eyes and sinks back on his chair again*) Nothing. I didn't know—I thought you were in your room.

SUE. (*comes to the table*) I was reading. Then I heard someone come down the stairs and go out. Who was it? (*With sudden terror*) It wasn't—Father?

NAT. No. He's up there—watching—as he always is.

SUE. (*sitting down—insistently*) Who was it?

NAT. (*evasively*) A man—I know.

SUE. What man? What is he? You're holding something back. Tell me.

NAT. (*raising his eyes defiantly*) A doctor.

SUE. (*alarmed*) Oh! (*With quick intuition*) You brought him up here—so that I wouldn't know!

NAT. (*doggedly*) No. I took him up here to see how things were—to ask him about Father.

SUE. (*as if afraid of the answer she will get*) Is he one of them—from the asylum? Oh, Nat, you haven't——

NAT. (*interrupting her—hoarsely*) No, no! Be still.

SUE. That would be—the last horror.

NAT. (*defiantly*) Why? You always say that. What could be more horrible than things as they are? I believe—it would be better for him—away—where he couldn't see the sea. He'll forget his mad idea of waiting for a lost ship and a treasure that never was. (*As if trying to convince himself—vehemently*) I believe this!

SUE. (*reproachfully*) You don't, Nat. You know he'd die if he hadn't the sea to live with.

NAT. (*bitterly*) And you know old Smith will foreclose the mortgage. Is that nothing? We cannot pay. He came yesterday and talked with me. He knows the place is his—to all purposes. He talked as if we were merely his tenants, curse him! And he swore he'd foreclose immediately unless——

SUE. (*eagerly*) What?

NAT. (*in a hard voice*) Unless we have—Father—taken away.

SUE. (*in anguish*) Oh! But why, why? What is Father to him?

NAT. The value of the property—our home which is his, Smith's. The neighbors are afraid. They pass by on the road at nights coming back to their farms from the town. They see *him* up there walking back and forth—waving his arms against the sky. They're afraid. They talk of a complaint. They say for his own good he must be taken away. They even

whisper the house is haunted. Old Smith is afraid of his property. He thinks that *he* may set fire to the house—do anything——

SUE. (*despairingly*) But you told him how foolish that was, didn't you? That Father is quiet, always quiet.

NAT. What's the use of telling—when they believe—when they're afraid? (SUE *hides her face in her hands—a pause—* NAT *whispers hoarsely*) I've been afraid myself—at times.

SUE. Oh, Nat! Of what?

NAT. (*violently*) Oh, him and the sea he calls to! Of the damned sea he forced me on as a boy—the sea that robbed me of my arm and made me the broken thing I am!

SUE. (*pleadingly*) You can't blame Father—for your misfortune.

NAT. He took me from school and forced me on his ship, didn't he? What would I have been now but an ignorant sailor like him if he had had his way? No. It's the sea I should not blame, that foiled him by taking my arm and then throwing me ashore—another one of *his* wrecks!

SUE. (*with a sob*) You're bitter, Nat—and hard. It was so long ago. Why can't you forget?

NAT. (*bitterly*) Forget! You can talk! When Tom comes from this voyage you'll be married and out of this with life before you—a captain's wife as our mother was. I wish you joy.

SUE. (*supplicatingly*) And you'll come with us, Nat—and father, too—and then——

NAT. Would you saddle your young husband with a madman and a cripple? (*Fiercely*) No, no, not I! (*Vindictively*) And not him, either! (*With sudden meaning—deliberately*) I've

got to stay here. My book is three-fourths done—my book that will set me free! But I know, I feel, as sure as I stand here living before you, that I must finish it here. It could not live for me outside of this house where it was born. (*Staring at her fixedly*) So I will stay—in spite of hell! (SUE *sobs hopelessly. After a pause he continues*) Old Smith told me I could live here indefinitely without paying—as caretaker—if——

SUE. (*fearfully—like a whispered echo*) If?

NAT. (*staring at her—in a hard voice*) If I have *him* sent —where he'll no longer harm himself—nor others.

SUE. (*with horrified dread*) No—no, Nat! For our dead mother's sake.

NAT. (*struggling*) Did I say I had? Why do you look at me—like that?

SUE. Nat! Nat! For our mother's sake!

NAT. (*in terror*) Stop! Stop! She's dead—and at peace. Would you bring her tired soul back to him again to be bruised and wounded?

SUE. Nat!

NAT. (*clutching at his throat as though to strangle something within him—hoarsely*) Sue! Have mercy! (*His sister stares at him with dread foreboding.* NAT *calms himself with an effort and continues deliberately*) Smith said he would give two thousand cash if I would sell the place to him—and he would let me stay, rent-free, as caretaker.

SUE. (*scornfully*) Two thousand! Why, over and above the mortgage it's worth——

NAT. It's not what it's worth. It's what one can get, cash—for my book—for freedom!

SUE. So that's why he wants Father sent away, the wretch! He must know the will Father made——

NAT. Gives the place to me. Yes, he knows. I told him.

SUE. (*dully*) Ah, how vile men are!

NAT. (*persuasively*) If it were to be done—if it were, I say—there'd be half for you for your wedding portion. That's fair.

SUE. (*horrified*) Blood-money! Do you think I could touch it?

NAT. (*persuasively*) It would be only fair. I'd give it you.

SUE. My God, Nat, are you trying to bribe me?

NAT. No. It's yours in all fairness. (*With a twisted smile*) You forget I'm heir to the treasure, too, and can afford to be generous. Ha-ha.

SUE. (*alarmed*) Nat! You're so strange. You're sick, Nat. You couldn't talk this way if you were yourself. Oh, we must go away from here—you and father and I! Let Smith foreclose. There'll be something over the mortgage; and we'll move to some little house—by the sea so that father——

NAT. (*fiercely*) Can keep up his mad game with me—whispering dreams in my ear—pointing out to sea—mocking me with stuff like this! (*He takes the bracelet from his pocket. The sight of it infuriates him and he hurls it into a corner, exclaiming in a terrible voice*) No! No! It's too late for dreams now. It's too late; I've put them behind me tonight—forever!

SUE. (*looks at him and suddenly understands that what she dreads has come to pass—letting her head fall on her outstretched arms with a long moan*) Then—you've done it! You've sold him! Oh, Nat, you're cursed!

NAT. (*with a terrified glance at the roof above*) Ssshh! What are you saying? He'll be better off—away from the sea.

SUE. (*dully*) You've sold him.

NAT. (*wildly*) No! No! (*He takes the map from his pocket*) Listen, Sue! For God's sake, listen to me! See! The map of the island. (*He spreads it out on the table*) And the treasure—where the cross is made. (*He gulps and his words pour out incoherently*) I've carried it about for years. Is that nothing? You don't know what it means. It stands between me and my book. It's stood between me and life—driving me mad! *He* taught me to wait and hope with him—wait and hope —day after day. He made me doubt my brain and give the lie to my eyes—when hope was dead—when I knew it was all a dream—I couldn't kill it! (*His eyes starting from his head*) God forgive me, I still believe! And that's mad—mad, do you hear?

SUE. (*looking at him with horror*) And that is why—you hate him!

NAT. No, I don't—— (*Then in a sudden frenzy*) Yes! I do hate him! He's stolen my brain! I've got to free myself, can't you see, from him—and his madness.

SUE. (*terrified—appealingly*) Nat! Don't! You talk as if——

NAT. (*with a wild laugh*) As if I were mad? You're right —but I'll be mad no more! See! (*He opens the lantern and sets fire to the map in his hand. When he shuts the lantern again it flickers and goes out. They watch the paper burn with fascinated eyes as he talks*) See how I free myself and become sane. And now for facts, as the doctor said. I lied to you about him. He was a doctor from the asylum. See how it burns! It

must all be destroyed—this poisonous madness. Yes, I lied to you—see—it's gone—the last speck—and the only other map is the one Silas Horne took to the bottom of the sea with him. (*He lets the ash fall to the floor and crushes it with his foot*) Gone! I'm free of it—at last! (*His face is very pale, but he goes on calmly*) Yes, I sold him, if you will—to save my soul. They're coming from the asylum to get him—— (*There is a loud, muffled cry from above, which sounds like "Sail-ho," and a stamping of feet. The slide to the companionway above is slid back with a bang. A gust of air tears down into the room.* NAT *and* SUE *have jumped to their feet and stand petrified.* CAPTAIN BARTLETT *tramps down the stairs*)

NAT. (*with a shudder*) God! Did he hear?

SUE. Ssshh! (CAPTAIN BARTLETT *comes into the room. He bears a striking resemblance to his son, but his face is more stern and formidable, his form more robust, erect and muscular. His mass of hair is pure white, his bristly mustache the same, contrasting with the weather-beaten leather color of his furrowed face. Bushy gray brows overhang the obsessed glare of his fierce dark eyes. He wears a heavy, double-breasted blue coat, pants of the same material, and rubber boots turned down from the knee*)

BARTLETT. (*in a state of mad exultation strides toward his son and points an accusing finger at him.* NAT *shrinks backward a step*) Bin thinkin' me mad, did ye? Thinkin' it for the past three years, ye bin—ever since them fools on the Slocum tattled their damn lie o' the Mary Allen bein' a wreck.

NAT. (*swallowing hard—chokingly*) No—— Father—I——

BARTLETT. Don't lie, ye whelp! You that I'd made my heir

—aimin' to git me out o' the way! Aimin' to put me behind the bars o' the jail for mad folk!

SUE. Father—no!

BARTLETT (*waving his hand for her to be silent*) Not you, girl, not you. You're your mother.

NAT. (*very pale*) Father—do you think—I——

BARTLETT (*fiercely*) A lie in your eyes! I bin a-readin' 'em. My curse on you!

SUE. Father! Don't!

BARTLETT. Leave me be, girl. He believed, didn't he? And ain't he turned traitor—mockin' at me and sayin' it's all a lie—mockin' at himself, too, for bein' a fool to believe in dreams, as he calls 'em.

NAT. (*placatingly*) You're wrong, Father. I do believe.

BARTLETT. (*triumphantly*) Aye, now ye do! Who wouldn't credit their own eyes?

NAT. (*mystified*) Eyes?

BARTLETT. Have ye not seen her, then? Did ye not hear me hail?

NAT. (*confusedly*) Hail? I heard a shout. But—hail what? —seen what?

BARTLETT. (*grimly*) Aye, now's your punishment, Judas. (*Explosively*) The Mary Allen, ye blind fool, come back from the Southern Seas—come back as I swore she must!

SUE. (*trying to soothe him*) Father! Be quiet. It's nothing.

BARTLETT. (*not heeding her—his eyes fixed hypnotically on his son's*) Turned the pint a half-hour back—the Mary Allen loaded with gold as I swore she would be—carryin' her lowers—

not a reef in 'em—makin' port, boy, as I swore she must—too late for traitors, boy, too late!—droppin' her anchor just when I hailed her.

NAT. (*a haunted, fascinated look in his eyes, which are fixed immovably on his father's*) The Mary Allen! But how do you know?

BARTLETT. Not know my own ship! 'Tis you 're mad!

NAT. But at night—some other schooner——

BARTLETT. No other, I say! The Mary Allen—clear in the moonlight. And heed this: D'you call to mind the signal I gave to Silas Horne if he made this port o' a night?

NAT. (*slowly*) A red and a green light at the mainmast-head.

BARTLETT (*triumphantly*) Then look out if ye dare! (*He goes to the porthole, left forward*) Ye can see it plain from here. (*Commandingly*) Will ye believe your eyes? Look—and then call me mad! (NAT *peers through the porthole and starts back, a dumbfounded expression on his face*)

NAT. (*slowly*) A red and a green at the mainmast-head. Yes—clear as day.

SUE. (*with a worried look at him*) Let me see. (*She goes to the porthole*)

BARTLETT. (*to his son with fierce satisfaction*) Aye, ye see now clear enough—too late for you. (NAT *stares at him spellbound*) And from above I saw Horne and Cates and Jimmy Kanaka plain on the deck in the moonlight lookin' up at me. Come! (*He strides to the companionway, followed by* NAT. *The two of them ascend.* SUE *turns from the porthole, an expression of frightened bewilderment on her face. She shakes her head sadly. A loud "*Mary Allen, *ahoy!" comes from above in* BARTLETT'S *voice, followed like an echo by the same hail from* NAT.

SUE *covers her face with her hands, shuddering.* NAT *comes down the companionway, his eyes wild and exulting*)

SUE. (*brokenly*) He's bad tonight, Nat. You're right to humor him. It's the best thing.

NAT. (*savagely*) Humor him? What in hell do you mean?

SUE (*pointing to the porthole*) There's nothing there, Nat. There's not a ship in harbor.

NAT. You're a fool—or blind! The Mary Allen's there in plain sight of anyone, with the red and the green signal-lights. Those fools lied about her being wrecked. And I've been a fool, too.

SUE. But, Nat, there's nothing. (*She goes over to the porthole again*) Not a ship. See.

NAT. I saw, I tell you! From above it's all plain. (*He turns from her and goes back to his seat by the table.* SUE *follows him, pleading frightenedly*)

SUE. Nat! You mustn't let this—— You're all excited and trembling, Nat. (*She puts a soothing hand on his forehead*)

NAT. (*pushing her away from him roughly*) You blind fool! (*Bartlett comes down the steps of the companionway. His face is transfigured with the ecstasy of a dream come true*)

BARTLETT. They've lowered a boat—the three—Horne and Cates and Jimmy Kanaka. They're a-rowin' ashore. I heard the oars in the locks. Listen! (*A pause*)

NAT. (*excitedly*) I hear!

SUE. (*who has taken the chair by her brother—in a warning whisper*) It's the wind and sea you hear, Nat. Please!

BARTLETT. (*suddenly*) Hark! They've landed. They're back on earth again as I swore they'd come back. They'll be a-comin' up the path now. (*He stands in an attitude of rigid*

attention. NAT *strains forward in his chair. The sound of the wind and sea suddenly ceases and there is a heavy silence. A dense green glow floods slowly in rhythmic waves like a liquid into the room—as of great depths of the sea faintly penetrated by light*)

NAT. (*catching at his sister's hand—chokingly*) See how the light changes! Green and gold! (*He shivers*) Deep under the sea! I've been drowned for years! (*Hysterically*) Save me! Save me!

SUE. (*patting his hand comfortingly*) Only the moonlight, Nat. It hasn't changed. Be quiet, dear, it's nothing. (*The green light grows deeper and deeper*)

BARTLETT. (*in a crooning, monotonous tone*) They move slowly—slowly. They're heavy, I know, heavy—the two chests. Hark! They're below at the door. You hear?

NAT. (*starting to his feet*) I hear! I left the door open.

BARTLETT. For them?

NAT. For them.

SUE. (*shuddering*) Ssshh! (*The sound of a door being heavily slammed is heard from way down in the house*).

NAT. (*to his sister—excitedly*) There! You hear?

SUE. A shutter in the wind.

NAT. There is no wind.

BARTLETT. Up they come! Up, bullies! They're heavy—heavy! (*The padding of bare feet sounds from the floor below —then comes up the stairs*)

NAT. You hear them now?

SUE. Only the rats running about. It's nothing, Nat.

BARTLETT. (*rushing to the door and throwing it open*) Come

in, lads, come in!—and welcome home! (*The forms of* SILAS HORNE, CATES, *and* JIMMY KANAKA *rise noiselessly into the room from the stairs. The last two carry heavy inlaid chests.* HORNE *is a parrot-nosed, angular old man dressed in gray cotton trousers and a singlet torn open across his hairy chest.* JIMMY *is a tall, sinewy, bronzed young Kanaka. He wears only a breech-cloth.* CATES *is squat and stout and is dressed in dungaree pants and a shredded white sailor's blouse, stained with iron-rust. All are in their bare feet. Water drips from their soaked and rotten clothes. Their hair is matted, intertwined with slimy strands of seaweed. Their eyes, as they glide silently into the room, stare frightfully wide at nothing. Their flesh in the green light has the suggestion of decomposition. Their bodies sway limply, nervelessly, rhythmically as if to the pulse of long swells of the deep sea*)

NAT. (*making a step toward them*) See! (*Frenziedly*) Welcome home, boys.

SUE. (*grabbing his arm*) Sit down, Nat. It's nothing. There's no one there. Father—sit down!

BARTLETT. (*grinning at the three and putting his finger to his lips*) Not here, boys, not here—not before him. (*He points to his son*) He has no right, now. Come. The treasure is ours only. We'll go away with it together. Come. (*He goes to the companionway. The three follow. At the foot of it* HORNE *puts a swaying hand on his shoulder and with the other holds out a piece of paper to him.* BARTLETT *takes it and chuckles exultantly*) That's right—for him—that's right! (*He ascends. The figures sway up after him*)

NAT. (*frenziedly*) Wait! (*He struggles toward the companionway*)

SUE. (*trying to hold him back*) Nat—don't! Father—come back!

NAT. Father! (*He flings her away from him and rushes up the companionway. He pounds against the slide, which seems to have been shut down on him*)

SUE. (*hysterically—runs wildly to the door in rear*) Help! help! (*As she gets to the door* DOCTOR HIGGINS *appears, hurrying up the stairs*)

HIGGINS. (*excitedly*) Just a moment, Miss. What's the matter?

SUE. (*with a gasp*) My father—up there!

HIGGINS. I can't see—where's my flash? Ah. (*He flashes it on her terror-stricken face, then quickly around the room. The green glow disappears. The wind and sea are heard again. Clear moonlight floods through the portholes.* HIGGINS *springs to the companionway.* NAT *is still pounding*) Here, Bartlett. Let me try.

NAT. (*coming down—looking dully at the doctor*) They've locked it. I can't get up.

HIGGINS. (*looks up—in an astonished voice*) What's the matter, Bartlett? It's all open. (*He starts to ascend*)

NAT. (*in a voice of warning*) Look out, man. Look out for them!

HIGGINS. (*calls down from above*) Them? Who? There's no one here. (*Suddenly—in alarm*) Come up! Lend a hand here! He's fainted! (NAT *goes up slowly.* SUE *goes over and lights the lantern, then hurries back to the foot of the companionway with it. There is a scuffling noise from above. They reappear, carrying* CAPTAIN BARTLETT'S *body*)

HIGGINS. Easy now! (*They lay him on the couch in rear.*

SUE *sets the lantern down by the couch.* HIGGINS *bends and listens for a heart-beat. Then he rises, shaking his head*). I'm sorry——

SUE. (*dully*) Dead?

HIGGINS. (*nodding*) Heart failure, I should judge. (*With an attempt at consolation*) Perhaps it's better so, if——

NAT. (*as if in a trance*) There was something Horne handed him. Did you see?

SUE. (*wringing her hands*) Oh, Nat, be still! He's dead. (*To* HIGGINS *with pitiful appeal*) Please go—go——

HIGGINS. There's nothing I can do?

SUE. Go—please—— (HIGGINS *bows stiffly and goes out.* NAT *moves slowly to his father's body, as if attracted by some irresistible fascination*)

NAT. Didn't you see? Horne handed him something.

SUE. (*sobbing*) Nat! Nat! Come away! Don't touch him, Nat! Come away. (*But her brother does not heed her. His gaze is fixed on his father's right hand, which hangs downward over the side of the couch. He pounces on it and forcing the clenched fingers open with a great effort, secures a crumpled ball of paper*)

NAT. (*flourishing it above his head with a shout of triumph*) See! (*He bends down and spreads it out in the light of the lantern*) The map of the island! Look! It isn't lost for me after all! There's still a chance—*my* chance! (*With mad, solemn decision*) When the house is sold I'll go—and I'll find it! Look! It's written here in his handwriting: "The treasure is buried where the cross is made."

SUE. (*covering her face with her hands—brokenly*) Oh, God! Come away, Nat! Come away!

(*The Curtain Falls*)

THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES

A Play in One Act

CHARACTERS

YANK
DRISCOLL
OLSON
DAVIS
COCKY
SMITTY
PAUL
seamen of the British tramp steamer, Glencairn

LAMPS, *the lamp-trimmer*

CHIPS, *the carpenter*

OLD TOM, *the donkeyman*

BIG FRANK
DICK
MAX
PADDY
firemen on the Glencairn

BELLA
SUSIE
VIOLET
PEARL
West Indian negresses

THE FIRST MATE

Two other seamen—SCOTTY and IVAN—and several other members of the stokehole-engine-room crew.

THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES

SCENE. *A forward section of the main deck of the British tramp steamer* Glencairn, *at anchor off an island in the West Indies. The full moon, half-way up the sky, throws a clear light on the deck. The sea is calm and the ship motionless.*

On the left two of the derrick booms of the foremast jut out at an angle of forty-five degrees, black against the sky. In the rear the dark outline of the port bulwark is sharply defined against a distant strip of coral beach, white in the moonlight, fringed with coco-palms whose tops rise clear of the horizon. On the right is the forecastle with an open doorway in the center leading to the seamen's and firemen's compartments. On either side of the doorway are two closed doors opening on the quarters of the bo'sun, the ship's carpenter, the messroom steward, and the donkeyman—what might be called the petty officers of the ship. Near each bulwark there is also a short stairway, like a section of fire escape, leading up to the forecastle head (the top of the forecastle)—the edge of which can be seen on the right.

In the center of the deck, and occupying most of the space, is the large, raised square of the number one hatch, covered with canvas, battened down for the night.

A melancholy negro chant, faint and far-off, drifts, crooning, over the water.

Most of the seamen and firemen are reclining or sitting on the hatch. PAUL *is leaning against the port bulwark, the upper part of his stocky figure outlined against the sky.* SMITTY *and*

COCKY *are sitting on the edge of the forecastle head with their legs dangling over. Nearly all are smoking pipes or cigarettes. The majority are dressed in patched suits of dungaree. Quite a few are in their bare feet and some of them, especially the firemen, have nothing on but a pair of pants and an undershirt. A good many wear caps.*

There is the low murmur of different conversations going on in the separate groups as the curtain rises. This is followed by a sudden silence in which the singing from the land can be plainly heard.

DRISCOLL. (*a powerfully built Irishman who is sitting on the edge of the hatch, front—irritably*) Will ye listen to them naygurs? I wonder now, do they call that keenin' a song?

SMITTY. (*a young Englishman with a blond mustache. He is sitting on the forecastle head looking out over the water with his chin supported on his hands*) It doesn't make a chap feel very cheerful, does it? (*He sighs*)

COCKY. (*a wizened runt of a man with a straggling gray mustache—slapping* SMITTY *on the back*) Cheero, ole dear! Down't be ser dawhn in the marf, Duke. She loves yer.

SMITTY. (*gloomily*) Shut up, Cocky! (*He turns away from* COCKY *and falls to dreaming again, staring toward the spot on shore where the singing seems to come from*)

BIG FRANK. (*a huge fireman sprawled out on the right of the hatch—waving a hand toward the land*) They bury somebody—py chimminy Christmas, I tink so from way it sound.

YANK. (*a rather good-looking rough who is sitting beside* DRISCOLL) What d'yuh mean, bury? They don't plant 'em down here, Dutchy. They eat 'em to save fun'ral expenses. I

guess this guy went down the wrong way an' they got indigestion.

COCKY. Indigestion! Ho yus, not 'arf! Down't yer know as them blokes 'as two stomacks like a bleedin' camel?

DAVIS. (*a short, dark man seated on the right of hatch*) An' you seen the two, I s'pect, ain't you?

COCKY. (*scornfully*) Down't be showin' yer igerance be tryin' to make a mock o' me what has seen more o' the world than yeself ever will.

MAX. (*a Swedish fireman—from the rear of hatch*) Spin dat yarn, Cocky.

COCKY. It's Gawd's troof, what I tole yer. I 'eard it from a bloke what was captured pris'ner by 'em in the Solomon Islands. Shipped wiv 'im one voyage. 'Twas a rare treat to 'ear 'im tell what 'appened to 'im among 'em. (*Musingly*) 'E was a funny bird, 'e was—'ailed from Mile End, 'e did.

DRISCOLL. (*with a snort*) Another lyin' cockney, the loike av yourself!

LAMPS. (*a fat Swede who is sitting on a camp stool in front of his door talking with* CHIPS) Where you meet up with him, Cocky?

CHIPS. (*a lanky Scotchman—derisively*) In New Guinea, I'll lay my oath!

COCKY. (*defiantly*) Yus! It *was* in New Guinea, time I was shipwrecked there. (*There is a perfect storm of groans and laughter at this speech*)

YANK. (*getting up*) Yuh know what we said yuh'd get if yuh sprung any of that lyin' New Guinea dope on us again, don't yuh? Close that trap if yuh don't want a duckin' over the side.

COCKY. Ow, I was on'y tryin' to edicate yer a bit. (*He sinks into dignified silence*)

YANK. (*nodding toward the shore*) Don't yuh know this is the West Indies, yuh crazy mut? There ain't no cannibals here. They're only common niggers.

DRISCOLL. (*irritably*) Whativir they are, the divil take their cryin'. It's enough to give a man the jigs listenin' to 'em.

YANK. (*with a grin*) What's the matter, Drisc? Yuh're as sore as a boil about somethin'.

DRISCOLL. I'm dyin' wid impatience to have a dhrink; an' that blarsted bumboat naygur woman took her oath she'd bring back rum enough for the lot av us whin she came back on board tonight.

BIG FRANK. (*overhearing this—in a loud eager voice*) You say the bumboat voman vill bring booze?

DRISCOLL. (*sarcastically*) That's right—tell the Old Man about ut, an' the Mate, too. (*All of the crew have edged nearer to* DRISCOLL *and are listening to the conversation with an air of suppressed excitement.* DRISCOLL *lowers his voice impressively and addresses them all*) She said she cud snake ut on board in the bottoms av thim baskets av fruit they're goin' to bring wid 'em to sell to us for'ard.

THE DONKEYMAN. (*an old gray-headed man with a kindly, wrinkled face. He is sitting on a camp stool in front of his door, right front*) She'll be bringin' some black women with her this time—or times has changed since I put in here last.

DRISCOLL. She said she wud—two or three—more, maybe, I dunno. (*This announcement is received with great enthusiasm by all hands*)

COCKY. What a bloody lark!

OLSON. Py yingo, we have one hell of a time!

DRISCOLL. (*warningly*) Remimber ye must be quiet about ut, ye scuts—wid the dhrink, I mane—ivin if the bo'sun is ashore. The Old Man ordered her to bring no booze on board or he wudn't buy a thing off av her for the ship.

PADDY. (*a squat, ugly Liverpool Irishman*) To the divil wid him!

BIG FRANK. (*turning on him*) Shud up, you tamn fool, Paddy! You vant make trouble? (*To* DRISCOLL) You und me, ve keep dem quiet, Drisc.

DRISCOLL. Right ye are, Dutchy. I'll split the skull av the first wan av ye starts to foight. (*Three bells are heard striking*)

DAVIS. Three bells. When's she comin', Drisc?

DRISCOLL. She'll be here any minute now, surely. (*To* PAUL, *who has returned to his position by the bulwark after hearing* DRISCOLL'S *news*) D'you see 'em comin', Paul?

PAUL. I don't see anyting like bumboat. (*They all set themselves to wait, lighting pipes, cigarettes, and making themselves comfortable. There is a silence broken only by the mournful singing of the negroes on shore*)

SMITTY. (*slowly—with a trace of melancholy*) I wish they'd stop that song. It makes you think of—well—things you ought to forget. Rummy go, what?

COCKY. (*slapping him on the back*) Cheero, ole love! We'll be 'avin our rum in arf a mo', Duke. (*He comes down to the deck, leaving* SMITTY *alone on the forecastle head*)

BIG FRANK. Sing someting, Drisc. Den ve don't hear dot yelling.

DAVIS. Give us a chanty, Drisc.

PADDY. Wan all av us knows.

MAX. We all sing in on chorus.

OLSON. "Rio Grande," Drisc.

BIG FRANK. No, ve don't know dot. Sing "Viskey Johnny."

CHIPS. "Flyin' Cloud."

COCKY. Now! Guv us "Maid o' Amsterdam."

LAMPS. "Santa Anna" iss a good one.

DRISCOLL. Shut your mouths, all av you. (*Scornfully*) A chanty is ut ye want? I'll bet me whole pay day there's not wan in the crowd 'ceptin' Yank here, an' Ollie, an' meself, an' Lamps an' Cocky, maybe, wud be sailors enough to know the main from the mizzen on a windjammer. Ye've heard the names of chanties but divil a note av the tune or a loine av the words do ye know. There's hardly a rale deep-water sailor lift on the seas, more's the pity.

YANK. Give us "Blow The Man Down." We all know some of that. (*A chorus of assenting voices*) Yes!—Righto!—Let 'er drive! Start 'er, Drisc! (*etc.*)

DRISCOLL. Come in then, all av ye. (*He sings*) As I was a-roamin' down Paradise Street——

ALL. Wa-a-ay, blow the man down!

DRISCOLL. As I was a-roamin' down Paradise Street——

ALL. Give us some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS

Blow the man down, boys, oh, blow the man down!
Wa-a-ay, blow the man down!
As I was a-roamin' down Paradise Street—
Give us some time to blow the man down!

DRISCOLL. A pretty young maiden I chanced for to meet.

ALL. Wa-a-ay, blow the man down!

DRISCOLL. A pretty young maiden I chanced for to meet.

ALL. Give us some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS

Blow the man down, boys, oh, blow the man down!
Wa-a-ay, blow the man down!
A pretty young maiden I chanced for to meet.
Give us some time to blow the man down!

PAUL. (*just as* DRISCOLL *is clearing his throat preparatory to starting the next verse*) Hay, Drisc! Here she come, I tink. Some bumboat comin' dis way. (*They all rush to the side and look toward the land*)

YANK. There's five or six of them in it—and they paddle like skirts.

DRISCOLL. (*wildly elated*) Hurroo, ye scuts! 'Tis thim right enough. (*He does a few jig steps on the deck*)

OLSON. (*after a pause during which all are watching the approaching boat*) Py yingo, I see six in boat, yes, sir.

DAVIS. I kin make out the baskets. See 'em there amidships.

BIG FRANK. Vot kind booze dey bring—viskey?

DRISCOLL. Rum, foine West Indy rum wid a kick in ut loike a mule's hoind leg.

LAMPS. Maybe she don't bring any; maybe skipper scare her.

DRISCOLL. Don't be throwin' cold water, Lamps. I'll skin her black hoide off av her if she goes back on her worrd.

YANK. Here they come. Listen to 'em gigglin'. (*Calling*) Oh, you kiddo! (*The sound of women's voices can be heard talking and laughing*)

DRISCOLL. (*calling*) Is ut you, Mrs. Old Black Joe?

A WOMAN'S VOICE. 'Ullo, Mike! (*There is loud feminine laughter at this retort*)

DRISCOLL. Shake a leg an' come abord thin.

THE WOMAN'S VOICE. We're a-comin'.

DRISCOLL. Come on, Yank. You an' me'd best be goin' to give 'em a hand wid their truck. 'Twill put 'em in good spirits.

COCKY. (*as they start off left*) Ho, you ain't 'arf a fox, Drisc. Down't drink it all afore we sees it.

DRISCOLL. (*over his shoulder*) You'll be havin' yours, me sonny bye, don't fret. (*He and* YANK *go off left*)

COCKY. (*licking his lips*) Gawd blimey, I can do wiv a wet.

DAVIS. Me, too!

CHIPS. I'll bet there ain't none of us'll let any go to waste.

BIG FRANK. I could trink a whole barrel mineself, py chimminy Christmas!

COCKY. I 'opes all the gels ain't as bloomin ugly as 'er. Looked like a bloody organ-grinder's monkey, she did. Gawd, I couldn't put up wiv the likes of 'er!

PADDY. Ye'll be lucky if any of thim looks at ye, ye squint-eyed runt.

COCKY. (*angrily*) Ho, yus? You ain't no bleedin' beauty prize yeself, me man. A 'airy ape, I calls yer.

PADDY. (*walking toward him—truculently*) Whot's thot? Say ut again if ye dare.

COCKY. (*his hand on his sheath-knife—snarling*) 'Airy ape! That's wot I says! (PADDY *tries to reach him but the others keep them apart*)

BIG FRANK. (*pushing* PADDY *back*) Vot's the matter mit you, Paddy. Don't you hear vat Driscoll say—no fighting?

PADDY. (*grumblingly*) I don't take no back-talk from that deck-scrubbin' shrimp.

COCKY. Blarsted coal-puncher! (DRISCOLL *appears wearing a broad grin of satisfaction. The fight is immediately forgotten by the crowd, who gather around him with exclamations of eager curiosity.* How is it, Drisc? Any luck? Vot she bring, Drisc? Where's the gels? *etc.*)

DRISCOLL. (*with an apprehensive glance back at the bridge*) Not so loud, for the love av hivin! (*The clamor dies down*) Yis, she has ut wid her. She'll be here in a minute wid a pint bottle or two for each wan av ye—three shillin's a bottle. So don't be impashunt.

COCKY. (*indignantly*) Three bob! The bloody cow!

SMITTY. (*with an ironic smile*) Grand larceny, by God! (*They all turn and look up at him surprised to hear him speak*)

OLSON. Py yingo, we don't pay so much.

BIG FRANK. Tamn black tief!

PADDY. We'll take ut away from her and give her nothin'.

THE CROWD. (*growling*) Dirty thief! Dot's right! Give her nothin'! Not a bloomin' 'apenny! (*etc.*)

DRISCOLL. (*grinning*) Ye can take ut or lave ut, me sonny byes. (*He casts a glance in the direction of the bridge and then reaches inside his shirt and pulls out a pint bottle*) 'Tis foine rum, the rale stuff. (*He drinks*) I slipped this wan out av wan of the baskets whin they wasn't lookin'. (*He hands the bottle to* OLSON *who is nearest him*) Here ye are, Ollie. Take a small sup an' pass ut to the nixt. 'Tisn't much but 'twill serve to take the black taste out av your mouths if ye go aisy wid ut. An' there's buckets more av ut comin'. (*The*

bottle passes from hand to hand, each man taking a sip and smacking his lips with a deep "Aa-ah" of satisfaction)

DAVIS. Where's she now, Drisc?

DRISCOLL. Up havin' a worrd wid the skipper, makin' arrangements about the money, I s'pose.

DAVIS. An' where's the other gels?

DRISCOLL. Wid her. There's foive av thim she took aboard —two swate little slips av things, near as white as you an' me are, for that gray-whiskered auld fool, an' the mates—an' the engineers too, maybe. The rist of thim'll be comin' for'ard whin she comes.

COCKY. 'E ain't 'arf a funny ole bird, the skipper. Gawd blimey! 'Member when we sailed from 'ome 'ow 'e stands on the bridge lookin' like a bloody ole sky pilot? An' 'is missus dawhn on the bloomin' dock 'owlin' fit to kill 'erself? An' 'is kids 'owlin' an' wavin' their 'andkerchiefs? (*With great moral indignation*) An' 'ere 'e is makin' up to a bleedin' nigger! There's a captain for yer! Gawd blimey! Bloody crab, I calls 'im!

DRISCOLL. Shut up, ye insect! Sure, it's not you should be talkin', an' you wid a woman an' childer weepin' for ye in iviry divil's port in the wide worrld, if we can believe your own tale av ut.

COCKY. (*still indignant*) I ain't no bloomin' captain. I ain't. I ain't got no missus—reg'lar married, I means. I ain't——

BIG FRANK. (*putting a huge paw over* COCKY's *mouth*) You aint' going talk so much, you hear? (COCKY *wriggles away from him*) Say, Drisc, how ve pay dis voman for booze? Ve ain't got no cash.

DRISCOLL. It's aisy enough. Each girl'll have a slip av

paper wid her an' whin you buy anythin' you write ut down and the price beside ut and sign your name. If ye can't write have some one who can do ut for ye. An' rimimber this: Whin ye buy a bottle av dhrink or (*with a wink*) somethin' else forbid, ye must write down tobaccy or fruit or somethin' the loike av that. Whin she laves the skipper'll pay what's owin' on the paper an' take ut out av your pay. Is ut clear to ye now?

ALL. Yes—Clear as day—Aw right, Drisc—Righto—Sure (*etc.*)

DRISCOLL. An' don't forgit what I said about bein' quiet wid the dhrink, or the Mate'll be down on our necks an' spile the fun. (*A chorus of assent*)

DAVIS. (*looking aft*) Ain't this them comin'? (*They all look in that direction. The silly laughter of a woman is heard*)

DRISCOLL. Look at Yank, wud ye, wid his arrm around the middle av wan av thim. That lad's not wastin' any toime. (*The four women enter from the left, giggling and whispering to each other. The first three carry baskets on their heads. The youngest and best-looking comes last.* YANK *has his arm about her waist and is carrying her basket in his other hand. All four are distinct negro types. They wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes and have bright bandana handkerchiefs on their heads. They put down their baskets on the hatch and sit down beside them. The men crowd around, grinning*)

BELLA. (*she is the oldest, stoutest, and homeliest of the four —grinning back at them*) 'Ullo, boys.

THE OTHER GIRLS. 'Ullo, boys.

THE MEN. Hello, yourself—Evenin'—Hello—How are you? (*etc.*)

BELLA. (*genially*) Hope you had a nice voyage. My name's Bella, this here's Susie, yander's Violet, and her there (*pointing to the girl with* YANK) is Pearl. Now we all knows each other.

PADDY. (*roughly*) Never mind the girls. Where's the dhrink?

BELLA. (*tartly*) You're a hawg, ain't you? Don't talk so loud or you don't git any—you nor no man. Think I wants the ole captain to put me off the ship, do you?

YANK. Yes, nix on hollerin', you! D'yuh wanta queer all of us?

BELLA. (*casting a quick glance over her shoulder*) Here! Some of you big strapping boys sit back of us on the hatch there so's them officers can't see what we're doin'. (DRISCOLL *and several of the others sit and stand in back of the girls on the hatch.* BELLA *turns to* DRISCOLL) Did you tell 'em they gotter sign for what they gits—and *how* to sign?

DRISCOLL. I did—what's your name again—oh, yis—Bella, darlin'.

BELLA. Then it's all right; but you boys has gotter go inside the fo'castle when you gits your bottle. No drinkin' out here on deck. I ain't takin' no chances. (*An impatient murmur of assent goes up from the crowd*) Ain't that right, Mike?

DRISCOLL. Right as rain, darlin'. (BIG FRANK *leans over and says something to him in a low voice.* DRISCOLL *laughs and slaps his thigh*) Listen, Bella, I've somethin' to ask ye for my little friend here who's bashful. Ut has to do wid the ladies so I'd best be whisperin' ut to ye meself to kape them from blushin'. (*He leans over and asks her a question*)

BELLA. (*firmly*) Four shillin's.

DRISCOLL. (*laughing*) D'you hear that, all av ye? Four shillin's ut is.

PADDY. (*angrily*) To hell wid this talkin'. I want a dhrink.

BELLA. Is everything all right, Mike?

DRISCOLL. (*after a look back at the bridge*) Sure. Let her droive!

BELLA. All right, girls. (*The girls reach down in their baskets in under the fruit which is on top and each pulls out a pint bottle. Four of the men crowd up and take the bottles*) Fetch a light, Lamps, that's a good boy. (LAMPS *goes to his room and returns with a candle. This is passed from one girl to another as the men sign the sheets of paper for their bottles*) Don't you boys forget to mark down cigarettes or tobacco or fruit, remember! Three shillin's is the price. Take it into the fo'castle. For Gawd's sake, don't stand out here drinkin' in the moonlight. (*The four go into the forecastle. Four more take their places.* PADDY *plants himself in front of* PEARL *who is sitting by* YANK *with his arm still around her*)

PADDY. (*gruffly*) Gimme thot! (*She holds out a bottle which he snatches from her hand. He turns to go away*)

YANK. (*sharply*) Here, you! Where d'yuh get that stuff? You ain't signed for that yet.

PADDY. (*sullenly*) I can't write me name.

YANK. Then I'll write it for yuh. (*He takes the paper from* PEARL *and writes*) There ain't goin' to be no welchin' on little Bright Eyes here—not when I'm around, see? Ain't I right, kiddo?

PEARL. (*with a grin*) Yes, suh.

BELLA. (*seeing all four are served*) Take it into the

fo'castle, boys. (PADDY *defiantly raises his bottle and gulps down a drink in the full moonlight.* BELLA *sees him*) Look at 'im! Look at the dirty swine! (PADDY *slouches into the forecastle*) Wants to git me in trouble. That settles it! We all got to git inside, boys, where we won't git caught. Come on, girls. (*The girls pick up their baskets and follow* BELLA. YANK *and* PEARL *are the last to reach the doorway. She lingers behind him, her eyes fixed on* SMITTY, *who is still sitting on the forecastle head, his chin on his hands, staring off into vacancy*)

PEARL. (*waving a hand to attract his attention*) Come ahn in, pretty boy. Ah likes you.

SMITTY. (*coldly*) Yes; I want to buy a bottle, please. (*He goes down the steps and follows her into the forecastle. No one remains on deck but* THE DONKEYMAN, *who sits smoking his pipe in front of his door. There is the subdued babble of voices from the crowd inside but the mournful cadence of the song from the shore can again be faintly heard.* SMITTY *reappears and closes the door to the forecastle after him. He shudders and shakes his shoulders as if flinging off something which disgusted him. Then he lifts the bottle which is in his hand to his lips and gulps down a long drink.* THE DONKEYMAN *watches him impassively.* SMITTY *sits down on the hatch facing him. Now that the closed door has shut off nearly all the noise, the singing from shore comes clearly over the moonlit water*)

SMITTY. (*listening to it for a moment*) Damn that song of theirs. (*He takes another big drink*) What do you say, Donk?

THE DONKEYMAN. (*quietly*) Seems nice an' sleepy-like.

SMITTY. (*with a hard laugh*) Sleepy! If I listened to it long—sober—I'd never go to sleep.

THE DONKEYMAN. 'Tain't sich bad music, is it? Sounds

kinder pretty to me—low an' mournful—same as listenin' to the organ outside o' church of a Sunday.

SMITTY. (*with a touch of impatience*) I didn't mean it was bad music. It isn't. It's the beastly memories the damn thing brings up—for some reason. (*He takes another pull at the bottle*)

THE DONKEYMAN. Ever hear it before?

SMITTY. No; never in my life. It's just a something about the rotten thing which makes me think—of—well, oh, the devil! (*He forces a laugh*)

THE DONKEYMAN. (*spitting placidly*) Queer things, mem'ries. I ain't ever been bothered much by 'em.

SMITTY. (*looking at him fixedly for a moment—with quiet scorn*) No, you wouldn't be.

THE DONKEYMAN. Not that I ain't had my share o' things goin' wrong; but I puts 'em out o' me mind, like, an' fergets 'em.

SMITTY. But suppose you couldn't put them out of your mind? Suppose they haunted you when you were awake and when you were asleep—what then?

THE DONKEYMAN. (*quietly*) I'd git drunk, same's you're doin'.

SMITTY. (*with a harsh laugh*) Good advice. (*He takes another drink. He is beginning to show the effects of the liquor. His face is flushed and he talks rather wildly*) We're poor little lambs who have lost our way, eh, Donk? Damned from here to eternity, what? God have mercy on such as we! True, isn't it, Donk?

THE DONKEYMAN. Maybe; I dunno. (*After a slight pause*) What ever set you goin' to sea? You ain't made for it.

SMITTY. (*laughing wildly*) My old friend in the bottle here, Donk.

THE DONKEYMAN. I done my share o' drinkin' in my time. (*Regretfully*) Them was good times, those days. Can't hold up under drink no more. Doctor told me I'd got to stop or die. (*He spits contentedly*) So I stops.

SMITTY. (*with a foolish smile*) Then I'll drink one for you. Here's your health, old top! (*He drinks*)

THE DONKEYMAN. (*after a pause*) S'pose there's a gel mixed up in it some place, ain't there?

SMITTY. (*stiffly*) What makes you think so?

THE DONKEYMAN. Always is when a man lets music bother 'im. (*After a few puffs at his pipe*) An' she said she threw you over 'cause you was drunk; an' you said you was drunk 'cause she threw you over. (*He spits leisurely*) Queer thing, love, ain't it?

SMITTY. (*rising to his feet with drunken dignity*) I'll trouble you not to pry into my affairs, Donkeyman.

THE DONKEYMAN. (*unmoved*) That's everybody's affair, what I said. I been through it many's the time. (*Genially*) I always hit 'em a whack on the ear an' went out and got drunker'n ever. When I come home again they always had somethin' special nice cooked fur me to eat. (*Puffing at his pipe*) That's the on'y way to fix 'em when they gits on their high horse. I don't s'pose you ever tried that?

SMITTY. (*pompously*) Gentlemen don't hit women.

THE DONKEYMAN. (*placidly*) No; that's why they has mem'ries when they hears music. (SMITTY *does not deign to reply to this but sinks into a scornful silence.* DAVIS *and the*

girl VIOLET *come out of the forecastle and close the door behind them. He is staggering a bit and she is laughing shrilly*).

DAVIS. (*turning to the left*) This way, Rose, or Pansy, or Jessamine, or black Tulip, or Violet, or whatever the hell flower your name is. No one'll see us back here. (*They go off left*)

THE DONKEYMAN. There's love at first sight for you—an' plenty more o' the same in the fo'c's'tle. No mem'ries jined with that.

SMITTY. (*really repelled*) Shut up, Donk. You're disgusting. (*He takes a long drink*)

THE DONKEYMAN. (*philosophically*) All depends on how you was brung up, I s'pose. (PEARL *comes out of the forecastle. There is a roar of voices from inside. She shuts the door behind her, sees* SMITTY *on the hatch, and comes over and sits beside him and puts her arm over his shoulder*)

THE DONKEYMAN. (*chuckling*) There's love for you, Duke.

PEARL. (*patting* SMITTY's *face with her hand*) 'Ullo, pretty boy. (SMITTY *pushes her hand away coldly*) What you doin' out here all alone by yourself?

SMITTY. (*with a twisted grin*) Thinking and—(*he indicates the bottle in his hand*)—drinking to stop thinking. (*He drinks and laughs maudlinly. The bottle is three-quarters empty*)

PEARL. You oughtn't drink so much, pretty boy. Don't you know that? You have big, big headache come mawnin'.

SMITTY. (*dryly*) Indeed?

PEARL. That's true. Ah knows what Ah say. (*Cooingly*) Why you run 'way from me, pretty boy? Ah likes you. Ah don' like them other fellahs. They act too rough. You ain't

rough. You're a genelman. Ah knows. Ah can tell a genelman fahs Ah can see 'im.

SMITTY. Thank you for the compliment; but you're wrong, you see. I'm merely—a ranker. (*He adds bitterly*) And a rotter.

PEARL. (*patting his arm*) No, you ain't. Ah knows better. You're a genelman. (*Insinuatingly*) Ah wouldn't have nothin' to do with them other men, but (*she smiles at him enticingly*) you is diff'rent. (*He pushes her away from him disgustedly. She pouts*) Don' you like me, pretty boy?

SMITTY. (*a bit ashamed*) I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to be rude, you know, really. (*His politeness is drunkenly exaggerated*) I'm a bit off color.

PEARL. (*brightening up*) Den you do like me—little ways?

SMITTY. (*carelessly*) Yes, yes, why shouldn't I? (*He suddenly laughs wildly and puts his arm around her waist and presses her to him*) Why not? (*He pulls his arm back quickly with a shudder of disgust, and takes a drink.* PEARL *looks at him curiously, puzzled by his strange actions. The door from the forecastle is kicked open and* YANK *comes out. The uproar of shouting, laughing and singing voices has increased in violence.* YANK *staggers over toward* SMITTY *and* PEARL)

YANK. (*blinking at them*) What the hell—oh, it's you, Smitty the Duke. I was goin' to turn one loose on the jaw of any guy'd cop my dame, but seein' it's you—— (*Sentimentally*) Pals is pals and any pal of mine c'n have anythin' I got, see? (*Holding out his hand*) Shake, Duke. (SMITTY *takes his hand and he pumps it up and down*) You'n me's frens. Ain't I right?

SMITTY. Right it is, Yank. But you're wrong about this girl. She isn't with me. She was just going back to the fo'c's'tle to you. (PEARL *looks at him with hatred gathering in her eyes*)

YANK. Tha' right?

SMITTY. On my word!

YANK. (*grabbing her arm*) Come on then, you, Pearl! Le's have a drink with the bunch. (*He pulls her to the entrance where she shakes off his hand long enough to turn on* SMITTY *furiously*)

PEARL. You swine! You can go to hell! (*She goes into the forecastle, slamming the door*)

THE DONKEYMAN. (*spitting calmly*) There's love for you. They're all the same—white, brown, yeller 'n' black. A whack on the ear's the only thing'll learn 'em. (SMITTY *makes no reply but laughs harshly and takes another drink; then sits staring before him, the almost empty bottle tightly clutched in one hand. There is an increase in volume of the muffled clamor from the forecastle and a moment later the door is thrown open and the whole mob, led by Driscoll, pours out on deck. All of them are very drunk and several of them carry bottles in their hands.* BELLA *is the only one of the women who is absolutely sober. She tries in vain to keep the men quiet.* PEARL *drinks from* YANK'S *bottle every moment or so, laughing shrilly, and leaning against* YANK, *whose arm is about her waist.* PAUL *comes out last carrying an accordion. He staggers over and stands on top of the hatch, his instrument under his arm*)

DRISCOLL. Play us a dance, ye square-head swab!—a rale, God-forsaken son av a turkey trot wid guts to ut.

YANK. Straight from the old Barbary Coast in Frisco!

PAUL. I don't know. I try. (*He commences tuning up*)

YANK. Ataboy! Let 'er rip! (DAVIS *and* VIOLET *come back and join the crowd.* THE DONKEYMAN *looks on them all with a detached, indulgent air.* SMITTY *stares before him and does not seem to know there is anyone on deck but himself*)

BIG FRANK. Dance? I don't dance. I trink! (*He suits the action to the word and roars with meaningless laughter*)

DRISCOLL. Git out av the way thin, ye big hulk, an' give us some room. (BIG FRANK *sits down on the hatch, right. All of the others who are not going to dance either follow his example or lean against the port bulwark*)

BELLA. (*on the verge of tears at her inability to keep them in the forecastle or make them be quiet now they are out*) For Gawd's sake, boys, don't shout so loud! Want to git me in trouble?

DRISCOLL. (*grabbing her*) Dance wid me, me cannibal quane. (*Someone drops a bottle on deck and it smashes*)

BELLA. (*hysterically*) There they goes! There they goes! Captain'll hear that! Oh, my Lawd!

DRISCOLL. Be damned to him! Here's the music! Off ye go! (PAUL *starts playing "You Great Big Beautiful Doll" with a note left out every now and then. The four couples commence dancing—a jerk-shouldered version of the old Turkey Trot as it was done in the sailor-town dives, made more grotesque by the fact that all the couples are drunk and keep lurching into each other every moment. Two of the men start dancing together, intentionally bumping into the others.* YANK *and* PEARL *come around in front of* SMITTY *and, as they pass him,* PEARL *slaps him across the side of the face with all her might, and laughs viciously. He jumps to his feet with his fists clenched*

but sees who hit him and sits down again smiling bitterly. YANK *laughs boisterously*)

YANK. Wow! Some wallop! One on you, Duke.

DRISCOLL. (*hurling his cap at* PAUL) Faster, ye toad! (PAUL *makes frantic efforts to speed up and the music suffers in the process*)

BELLA. (*puffing*) Let me go. I'm wore out with you steppin' on my toes, you clumsy Mick. (*She struggles but* DRISCOLL *holds her tight*)

DRISCOLL. God blarst you for havin' such big feet, thin. Aisy, aisy, Mrs. Old Black Joe! 'Tis dancin'll take the blubber off ye. (*He whirls her around the deck by main force.* COCKY, *with* SUSIE, *is dancing near the hatch, right, when* PADDY, *who is sitting on the edge with* BIG FRANK, *sticks his foot out and the wavering couple stumble over it and fall flat on the deck. A roar of laughter goes up.* COCKY *rises to his feet, his face livid with rage, and springs at* PADDY, *who promptly knocks him down.* DRISCOLL *hits* PADDY *and* BIG FRANK *hits* DRISCOLL. *In a flash a wholesale fight has broken out and the deck is a surging crowd of drink-maddened men hitting out at each other indiscriminately, although the general idea seems to be a battle between seamen and firemen. The women shriek and take refuge on top of the hatch, where they huddle in a frightened group. Finally there is the flash of a knife held high in the moonlight and a loud yell of pain*)

DAVIS. (*somewhere in the crowd*) Here's the Mate comin'! Let's git out o' this! (*There is a general rush for the forecastle. In a moment there is no one left on deck but the little group of women on the hatch;* SMITTY, *still dazedly rubbing his*

cheek; THE DONKEYMAN *quietly smoking on his stool; and* YANK *and* DRISCOLL, *their faces battered up considerably, their undershirts in shreds, bending over the still form of* PADDY, *which lies stretched out on the deck between them. In the silence the mournful chant from the shore creeps slowly out to the ship*)

DRISCOLL. (*quickly—in a low voice*) Who knoifed him?

YANK. (*stupidly*) I didn't see it. How do I know? Cocky, I'll bet. (*The* FIRST MATE *enters from the left. He is a tall, strongly-built man dressed in a plain blue uniform*)

THE MATE. (*angrily*) What's all this noise about? (*He sees the man lying on the deck*) Hello! What's this? (*He bends down on one knee beside* PADDY)

DRISCOLL. (*stammering*) All av us—was in a bit av a harmless foight, sir—an'—I dunno—— (*The* MATE *rolls* PADDY *over and sees a knife wound on his shoulder*)

THE MATE. Knifed, by God. (*He takes an electric flash from his pocket and examines the cut*) Lucky it's only a flesh wound. He must have hit his head on deck when he fell. That's what knocked him out. This is only a scratch. Take him aft and I'll bandage him up.

DRISCOLL. Yis, sor. (*They take* PADDY *by the shoulders and feet and carry him off left. The* MATE *looks up and sees the women on the hatch for the first time*)

THE MATE. (*surprised*) Hello! (*He walks over to them*) Go to the cabin and get your money and clear off. If I had my way, you'd never—— (*His foot hits a bottle. He stoops down and picks it up and smells of it*) Rum, by God! So that's the trouble! I thought their breaths smelled damn queer. (*To the women, harshly*) You needn't go to the skipper for any

money. You won't get any. That'll teach you to smuggle rum on a ship and start a riot.

BELLA. But, Mister——

THE MATE. (*sternly*) You know the agreement—rum—no money.

BELLA. (*indignantly*) Honest to Gawd, Mister, I never brung no——

THE MATE (*fiercely*) You're a liar! And none of your lip or I'll make a complaint ashore tomorrow and have you locked up.

BELLA. (*subdued*) Please, Mister——

THE MATE. Clear out of this, now! Not another word out of you! Tumble over the side damn quick! The others are waiting for you. Hop, now! (*They walk quickly—almost run—off to the left.* THE MATE *follows them, nodding to* THE DONKEYMAN, *and ignoring the oblivious* SMITTY. *There is absolute silence on the ship for a few moments. The melancholy song of the negroes drifts crooning over the water.* SMITTY *listens to it intently for a time; then sighs heavily, a sigh that is half a sob*)

SMITTY. God! (*He drinks the last drop in the bottle and throws it behind him on the hatch*)

THE DONKEYMAN. (*spitting tranquilly*) More mem'ries? (SMITTY *does not answer him. The ship's bell tolls four bells.* THE DONKEYMAN *knocks out his pipe*) I think I'll turn in. (*He opens the door to his cabin, but turns to look at* SMITTY—*kindly*) You can't hear it in the fo'c's'tle—the music, I mean—an' there'll likely be more drink in there, too. Good-night. (*He goes in and shuts the door*)

SMITTY. Good-night, Donk. (*He gets wearily to his feet*

and walks with bowed shoulders, staggering a bit, to the forecastle entrance and goes in. There is silence for a second or so, broken only by the haunted, saddened voice of that brooding music, faint and far-off, like the mood of the moonlight made audible)

(*The Curtain Falls*)

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